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The city temple

THE

CITY TEMPLE.

Sermons

PREACHED IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, LONDON,

1869–70.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,

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The City Temple.

Report of a Service Conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, September 19th, 1869.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou directest the steps of men according to a counsel which we cannot understand. Thou dost as thou wilt in Heaven and on earth; we humbly desire to say, "Not our will but Thine be done. Thou dost so combine the strength of righteousness with the tenderness of love in all Thy ways concerning us, as to work in us a most perfect and joyful confidence in Thy fatherly dominion. Truly, Thy throne is high and lifted up, yet there is not a flower on all the earth that is not brightened by Thy smile; there is not an insect in the deepest places of the sea that draws not its little moment from Thy eternity. As for ourselves we live and move, and have our being in God. Once we lived unto ourselves; we were as our own gods; we took counsel of our own hearts and looked to our own understanding; but we are washed, we are cleansed, we have been slain on the Saviour's cross, and brought to know somewhat of the mystery of sacrifice, and now we are able to say, not only with submission, but with joy and rapture, "Not our will but Thine be done." We once should have regarded this as the prostration of our nature, as if it involved the throwing away of our manhood; but Thou hast brought us to know that Thy will is higher than our will; that the whole universe is absorbed in Thy great power, and in Thy boundless love; and that we only truly live as we live in harmony with Thyself. To-day we magnify Thee; though Thou art above all blessing, we would bless Thee. Our cup runneth over; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort us. Thou hast prepared for us a table in the wilderness; the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Thou dost lead us even through our disappointments, through the fading of our hopes and the

breaking of our purposes, into some further secret of Thy will, that we may be fitted for life and service according to Thy pleasure and not our own. We cannot understand this; it is too wonderful for us; we can but bow down and say, It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight. Thou knowest that we build our temples and enjoy our dreams and shape out our destiny for ourselves. We lay foundations on which we purpose to build; we say to-morrow shall be as this day and more abundant, and behold Thou dost break in upon our building and dreaming, and turnest away our thoughts, and spoilest that to which we have set our hand. In all this we desire to be found without murmuring. We would enthrone our Father upon the circle of the earth, and set Him above the floods. We would see Thee in the peaceful morning, in the fiery noontide, and amid the stars of night. We would see Thy going in all the way of our lives, and humbly desire to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. In the circumstances which we now represent, we desire to have an assurance of Thy special presence with us. We would not be content with any ordinary manifestation of Thy care; to-day, we would ask for an overflowing cup, for a multiplication and redundancy of blessing—for shower upon shower of blessings—that so we cannot understand but really believe, and heartily rejoice. Meet us in Thy house. We thank Thee that Thou hast a house upon the earth—a refuge for the distressed, a home for the wanderer, a sanctuary for those who would shed tears of penitence, and offer songs and desires of worship. What wait we for, but that Thou wouldst fill the house with Thy presence; that Thou wouldst send down upon us the Holy Ghost as a baptism of fire? We pray Thee to meet us as sinners; to come to us in the fulness of the blessing of the Cross; to draw us from sin to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness, and to wash us in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and the Saviour of the world. God be merciful unto us sinners. In Thy mercy show us all our sins, and then cast them behind Thee, to be remembered no more for ever; afterwards do Thou work in us all the beauty and fruitfulness of Thine own perfection. We would be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy, as thou art holy, righteous according to Thine own integrity, and tender with the inspiration of Thine own love. Restore the heavenly image in our nature perfectly; work out every lineament of Christ-like beauty upon us, and may we be finally presented to Thyself a glorious Church in which Thou shalt find full satisfaction. And, inasmuch as Thou hast called us unto repentance, and unto holiness, we beseech Thee to call us to ever-extending service in Thy kingdom. Thou hast given us heavenly treasures in earthen vessels, whilst Thou hast reserved the excellency of the power as Thine

own. Thou hast called us to great duty, to somewhat of endurance, and yet to multiplied and unexpected joys. Help us to know our ministry and to fulfil it with simplicity, with constancy, with determination; may nothing move us from the way which Thou hast marked out. Faint we may be, but may we also be pursuing. May our faces be turned to the rising sun, and may its light make our countenances glow among men as if we lived in constant day. Whether we publish Thy Gospel publicly or privately; whether we speak to the great congregation the Divine word of salvation, or go from house to house visiting the poor, and the sick, and the dying; or whether we teach within the sacred enclosure of our own family, let Thy blessing always accompany us, supporting our weakness, and saving us from all temptation. We supplicate Thy blessing on all who are in anywise endeavouring to do good; all preachers of the Gospel; all educators of the youthful mind; all who go seeking out the causes they know not, that they may serve the poor, the desolate, and the despairing; all who write a word for truth; all who do their business upon Christian principles, we beseech Thee to let Thy care of such be deeply felt by them, that they may be encouraged in their holy service, and be faithful to the very end. Remember those who cannot be with us to-day by reason of personal or relative affliction, with all who are shedding tears, with all who are knowing the awful secret of heart-breaking, all who are carrying within them griefs they cannot speak, all who have curtained themselves within the darkness of suffering. The Lord's blessing be extended towards all such, and may they with joy draw water on this holy day out of the wells of salvation! Now let Thy blessing come upon our hearts, rest upon us, and give us peace. Teach us Thy truth, help us to see its meaning, and to feel its force. Help us in all things to follow Jesus Christ through evil report and through good report, until we sit down with Him on the throne which He has promised to the saints. And unto the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as one God, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

The Sermon.

"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight."—ISAIAH xlv. 2.

MAN must go. It is not a question of whether we will go or not go, that is determined for us—we *must* go. Every man is accomplishing a journey, going through a process. No man is standing still. The infant is going on towards youth; youth is advancing towards the stature and strength of manhood; and man, in the summer of his prosperity and honour, is going on towards the sere leaf, and towards a land of darkness as darkness itself. Men must go on, then. The only question is—*How?* Man may go, either with God or without Him. Here comes in the honour and the danger of what is called liberty. Every man has it in his power to say to God, "Get Thee behind me, I'll not have Thee to reign over me." Man has it in his power to say that he will lean to his own understanding, and that he will endeavour to have all his own way. He can actually do that; he can go so far wrong as that; he can shut the door of his heart upon God, and say virtually, "Thou art not wanted here." So much of a devil can a man become as that! Don't let us misunderstand the case, then. God does not force himself upon us. He does not say, "I will compel you to follow me, I am determined to have my own way;" but He says, "I offer thee all this blessing, I extend towards thee this care, I will give thee of my power a sufficiency for thy day." He talks to us so condescendingly! Absolutely offering His gifts, bringing them down to us and talking about them with persuasiveness and urgent love, showing them to us, and seeking to engage our affections and our energies in the acceptance and realization of his great gifts. So there is no great hardship in our life. We are not forced to have God; we can deliberately take up our pen, and strike His name out of the page on which we intend to record our life; or, on the other hand, we can say "We are of yesterday, and know nothing; we are so wise as not to be able to tell what will occur to-morrow; we are so empty and barren as to carry our little earthly immortality in our nostrils. Lord lead, and we shall follow; we accept Thy mercy; we will go where Thou goest." So then religion is no tyranny; it is no pitiless compulsion of understanding and heart which we resent, but a blessing which first makes us poor, that it may afterwards enrich us with unwasting riches

of purity, and strength, and love. This is a great mystery, and not to to be learned by the letter; you must sufferingly, yet hopefully, live up to this, if you would know it. I cannot give you a lesson in it as if teaching children the alphabet; it is a mystery that can only be fathomed by life. These are the startling contradictions which are reconciled in the ecstasy and inspiration of love. But whether we go with God or without Him, we shall find crooked places; we had better clearly understand this, lest any one should turn round upon me after we have walked the first mile of Christian life, and say that he expected there would have been no such places in all the course. Whether we take God with us or not in the working out of our life, or go alone, we shall certainly have crooked places. Life is crooked; we ourselves are crooked; there is nothing in all human experience of which we can certainly say, This is perfectly straight. God himself often inserts a crook in the lot. The curve is God's, as well as the straight line; and what if, for reasons too deep for us, He should sometimes lead us along a sinuous course; what if he should often entangle our lot, and seek by these very trials, and perplexities, and knotty places, to work in us a purer simplicity and a tenderer gentleness? Set it down, then, as a fact that we shall have crooked places. I question whether there is a man here who has had any varied experience in the world—one who has known anything of life in its deepest passages and meanings—who would not say that, even with God's presence, he has found many crooked places, hard cares, anxieties that threatened to corrode and destroy him. I will admit so much that is painful about the Divine life as that. And I question whether there is any man here who has served the devil any length of time who would not instantly say that the way of transgressors was hard—hard, difficult, dangerous, terrible! I question whether there is any man here of deep moral experience who will say it was ever easy to take the devil's wages; they burn the hand that takes them, and destroy the heart that would fatten on the evil gain!

But, having taken God as our leader, we have come to know what is the meaning of having these crooked places made straight for us. In this world straight does not signify just what infantile minds would say it does mean. There are many ways of straightening a man's course—many ways of showing him what he ought to do, without describing it with square and compass, and setting it before him in exact geometrical lines. You know this, *you* grey-headed listeners, who carry with you the wrinkles of many years; you know what I mean by expressions that would be called contradictory by those who look not to things unseen. Perhaps some of these little children, whom I am glad to see in the congregation, wonder what I mean by such contradictory words, as to find

straightness in apparent crookedness—to find a curve so lengthened out as to make a clear path; but they will come to know what it means, as they enter upon the hard duties of a life that never ceases to educate all who are willing to learn.

I call upon all good men to witness, that in proportion as you have trusted in God—made Him your shield and buckler—he has taken your enemies out of your path one by one; in proportion as you have taken counsel of Him, and said, "Not our will, but Thine be done," you have been enabled to run through a troop, and leap over a wall; in proportion as you have brought your tumultuous agitations of mind into harmony with God's own quiet and peace, you have been enabled to say God's right hand and holy arm have gotten Him the victory, and through Him we, too, have triumphed. So that you have not found straight lines, as the world would call straight, and yet, amid all the curvature and intricacy you have been brought through upon a course that for all high purposes, for all filial education, for spiritual culture and strength, have been practically and really straight before your face. It is possible for the most filial disposition to feel occasional shrinking from the paths which God has distinctly commanded to be occupied. It would be possible for Abraham to say, "I believe God intends me to make this sacrifice of my only son, but I would rather put the knife into my own heart than make it." It is possible for a man to say, "This certainly appears to me to be the right thing to do; but if I do it, it will leave me poor, or, if rich, rich with bleeding memories, and broken purposes, and crushed affections." Let no man say that God has not made his road straight before him, because as he goes along that road he has to throw off that which he would gladly have kept—because he has to dig a grave here, and be nailed to a cross there. And then again, do not let us take little pieces of the course of life, and say, "What a turn there is here; what an obvious curve is there; do not let us deal so with God's way of discipline." A child might go to the geographer, and say, "What nonsense you talk about the earth being round! Look on this great crag; look on that deep dell; look on yonder great mountain, and the valley at its feet, and yet you talk about the earth being round." The geographer would have an instant answer for the child; his view is comprehensive; he does not look at the surface of the world in mere detail; he does not deal with inches, and feet, and yards; he sees a larger world than the child has had time to grasp. He explains what he means by the expression, "The earth is a globe," and justifies his strange statement. And so it is with God's wonderful dealings towards us: there are great rocks and barren deserts, deep, dank, dark pits, and defiles, and glens, and dells, rugged places that we cannot smooth over at all, and yet

when He comes to say to us at the end of the journey, "Now look back; there is the way that I have brought you," we shall be enabled to say, "Thou hast gone before us, and made our way straight." If that, then, be anything like the meaning of the text, if we have at all reached its spirit, let me proceed further to say that we should regard the text as a WARNING. There *are* crooked places. One could wish that we could make one's own the experience of the men that have gone before; that, for example, one could have believed fully what Solomon said after he swept the whole circuit of pleasure, and thus have saved ourselves from travelling a single inch of the way which he pronounced to be full of vanity. It seems, however, as if each man must run his own course, and taste the bitter waters for himself. There are, believe me, you young hearers especially, crooked places in life; crooked dispositions, men of whom you can make nothing. When you think you are walking in the line of their dispositions and sympathies, they turn perversely round upon you; men whom, when you are serving with all diligence and earnestness, will turn at the last hour, and be as unthankful and ungracious as the rock or the sand that is unblest by all the rich rains of Heaven. There are also crooked places in circumstances. When we think we are proceeding most satisfactorily, we sometimes come to knots and difficulties of which we can make nothing at all. So also crooked places are found in the *uncertainties* of life. No man can certainly say what will transpire during the next hour. A man can suppose, and conjecture, and assume, and put his little inductions together, and say, "I believe if these are true, such and such will be the result;" but something that he never thought about, that he had not anticipated at all, comes in and breaks up his whole scheme, and shows him that his wisdom is folly, and that his strength is weakness. And so again and again, to our disappointment and mortification, we are compelled to withdraw from our methods, and to abandon that on which we had set our heart.

Now, it would be something if we could teach all young persons this great fact, that there are crooked places in life, and that the mere buoyancy of youth cannot overcome them. There are, as you may too soon find, places so crooked that only God can thread his way out of them. Further, let us regard the text not only as a warning, but as a PROMISE. I will go before thee. This was a Divine promise made to Cyrus; and God has made the same promise to all who put their trust in Him. It is surely something to have a Father's promise singing in the heart. Many of us know the inspiration even of a human promise; many of us know that we never could have endured this bitter trial, or surmounted that overshadowing difficulty, had we not enjoyed the

presence and hopefulness of some friendly promise in the heart. What we feel our want of is the triumphant faith that says definitely to God, "Thou didst promise this, and we wait for its fulfilment." We want patience, too; patience that comes of faith, that God may, so to speak, have time to fulfil His promise. We are in such great haste, we are so very urgent in all our movements, and so impetuous in our desires, that we do not, as it were, give God opportunity to work out His promises; for He is slow in many of His promises. He is not slack concerning His promises, but often very slow, if we measure His movements by our own vehement passion. The reason why we have been left so often disappointed, mortified, defeated, is that we wished to outrun God, and to be a little ahead of Him in some favourite pursuit. The reason some of us are so low in spiritual health, in spiritual volume and compass, is that we have not regarded these words as a special and personal promise. There is a great difficulty about this matter of God's promises; so many of us believe only in what we can touch; so many of us are the victims of our senses—these poor dying deceivers, out of which you can get no compensation; they will cheat you, tempt you, they will urge you to destruction, and mock you and die, and then can you prosecute them? Can you sue them in some court for spiritual damages? Oh, the folly, the madness of atheistic wisdom! Shall we lovingly and thankfully take this as a promise into our heart of hearts? God does not say *when* He will straighten our path; He does not say *how;* the great thing for us to believe is that there is a special promise for us, and to wait in devout hope for its fulfilment. He who waits for God is not misspending his time. Such waiting is true living—such tarrying is the truest speed. The man that is running all the time and wearing out his feet is gaining nothing. If we could believe that, how calm, how quiet, how strong, how sublime would be our life! Let us regard the text, not only as a warning and as a promise, but specially as a PLAN. I lay stress upon the word PLAN: we are to regard this text as a scheme—a method, a special way of doing things. Clearly so. "I will go before thee." It is in that word *before* that I find the plan, and it is in that word *before* that I find the *difficulty* on the human side. God does not say, I will go alongside thee, we shall go step for step; he does not say, I will go behind thee and rectify thy mistakes, and efface all the traces of thy stumbling; he says, I will go before thee. Sometimes, it may be a long way before us, so that we cannot see Him; and sometimes it may be just in front of us. But whether beyond, far away, or here close at hand, the great idea we have to live upon is that God *goes before* us. If now and then he would let us get ahead of him; or if He would come to our side, as it were, and be equal with us; but He will not—He goes before. You

say that is sovereignty, that is dominion, that is the omnipotent and terrible Jehovah! Well, but it is more; it is love, it is tenderness, it is care. When the mother goes before her child that is taking its first little journey across the room, to move this chair and that stool, and to clear the course for the little traveller, is she haughtily saying, "I am your head; I am greater, and older, and better than you?" She never thought of saying anything of the kind: the very fact of her going before, the apparent act of priority and superiority, comes out of her love, and gentleness, and care, lest one of the steps of her child should slide. So let us not always think of God as exhibiting proofs of royalty and supremacy, or as throwing His shadow upon us to teach us our littleness, but rather think of Him going before us that he may remove the mountains and gather up the rough stones, and make plain places for our feet; and so, out of what some regard as a great overshadowing and chilling dominion, let us get the better idea of a patient, watchful, inexpressible tenderness.

"I will go before thee:" the idea of God going before every man as if he were the only man in the world is an idea that does not dwarf God, but rather exalts Him exceedingly. Whose sun is this that is coming burning and smiling in at these windows? *Whose* sun is it? There is not a beggar in the great city who cannot look at it and say, "I have it, as if there were not another being in the world; it is bathing me in glory, brightening me with its spirit of hopefulness, as if I were a king or a leader of nations;" there is not a poor little sick child in any of our hospitals who cannot look out of his window to-day and talk of this great light as though every beam were all his. So God is a universal spirit, encompassing all things, and yet He is mine, as if there were no other creature in the universe. "My Father and your Father, my God and your God," are Christ's own words, and it is in His spirit that we come to the highest realization of things that appear to be contradictory and impossible.

Let us beware of regarding this text as a mere matter of course. It is possible for some to say, "Well then, so be it." According to this teaching, God goes before all men, and makes the crooked places straight for them; but it is not so. There is an essential question of character to be settled. "The steps of a *good man* are ordered by the Lord;" "No good thing will He withhold from *them that walk uprightly*;" "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy steps." Character comes in there, and this character is a Christian character, as the whole revelation with which we have to deal is a Christian revelation. Christian character is represented alone in Christ Jesus, and even Christ Jesus himself is nothing if he be not slain on the cross as our sacrifice, and if

He shine not in all the triumph and Godhead of his resurrection. So then we just get round to that place which is the centre of all that is good and noble, and pure and heavenly—namely, the Cross. No cross, no life. This is a great mystery, and once more, I repeat, *we must love it to understand it.*

Let us beware of regarding this text as *a licence for carelessness.* Let us not say, "If God goes before me, and makes all places straight, why need I care?" To feel that God is going before, is to feel that life is sacred; to feel that we are putting our feet down upon a road that has been prepared for us by Almighty God, is to feel humbled, dwarfed, to know what is meant by insignificance. To the good man, all life is holy; there is no step of indifference; no subject that does not bring out his best desires. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground," is the expression of every man who knows what it is to have God going before him.

I have been preaching to myself this morning; I have been my own auditor, and have talked inwardly as well as outwardly. I am glad to have a text like this to run into, to find refuge in, to turn to as to a sanctuary; glad to get back from the vexation of details to something like first principles. There are some people who take an interest in us who do not hesitate to say that, in coming to this place, I have voluntarily come into a very crooked place. There are persons who do not hesitate to regard this Institution and all that belongs to it as indeed crooked and difficult, that is to say, difficult to manage so as to realise much success. There are, however, two ways of looking at that. If I were starting life as a minister, I should say, "Do not put me down in a church that is full, and that is boastful of its own respectability, because I cannot go up, but may go down; put me rather into a place that is quite empty, but around which there are plenty of people." In coming to this place, in exchanging a position that need not be described to those who know anything of English Independency, for this place, I did not look exclusively on what may be called the ordinary work of the ministry; I have ventured to look at London itself, that great and immeasurable "centre without a circumference;" I have ventured to look on young men, on strangers, on poor forlorn castaways, that would be glad to hear a word of Divine hope. I have thought of all these; and what if God should give me somewhat of result out of these? He would, if it so pleased Him. He delights to make the desert blossom as the rose. We are his agents; we are not employing ourselves; we are his servants. We are not our own masters; and if He go before—if God be for us—who can be against us? And then this difficulty has been put very

strongly; it is said, I do not know with what width of poetic licence—for some people become poetic who have no right to become so—that "there is nobody in the City on Sunday." If there is "nobody" in the City on Sundays, I believe there are a good many persons in the City on Thursdays, and that is the day on which I intend to exercise my ministry in this place. Here is a place in the very centre of civilization, within one minute's walk of some of the greatest institutions of commerce; is it not possible, on the Thursday at twelve o'clock, to get into this house, many who would be glad to hear the Word of Life? Are there not many poor strangers wandering about the City, who would be glad to hear that, after all, the world was in the arms of the great Father and Saviour Jesus Christ? Are there not many who cannot attend the prayer-meetings in their own suburban villages who would be glad to look into a place like this, and join with their brethren from many quarters worshipping God? This may be a dream—I believe it may become a fact. We must dream; if we fall back entirely upon facts, we shall never be facts ourselves. We must dream and hope, and try and determine, and work as if everything depended upon us, and then get away as if we were nothing, and had not done anything. So, if you please, I shall be happy to see as many of you here on Thursday, at twelve o'clock, as can come; and, if you cannot come, you may have it in your power to tell your friends, to tell your associates in business that there is a service of this kind—not an elaborate service, not what is called "displays of eloquence," no elaborate dissertations upon subjects that few care anything about, but prayer, and song, and speech, that may have a happy influence on human hearts.

I believe in printing. The printed page can get where the living man cannot; the printed page is there, can wait to be read, is in no particular hurry, and comes upon a man when he wants something to do—catches his eye when he is perhaps in a temper of mind that will enable him to feel the truth. So we shall publish on Thursday a revised report of what proceeds here on Sunday morning, or some other occasion, for one penny; and I trust that it will find its way into many houses, into many sick chambers, into many of the lurking-places of those who have no helper and no friend, and who seem to be out of the world, and away even from God.

So you see we purpose something; and though I have spoken about these purposes in this definite manner, I beg you to understand that I am speaking about them in my own heart with fear and trembling and self-misgiving, yet with a determination that we will at least endeavour, by God's blessing, to deserve well. Then, dear friends, let me say, in conclusion, do not make any crooked places for yourselves. Some people

have a great skill in making other people uncomfortable—for making straight lines into curves. Do not let us be awkward; anybody can make himself a nuisance. Do not let us try that; it is too common; but let every man resolve that he, at all events, will not be the first to say an unkind word, or cherish an unworthy suspicion. And now, what is it we wait for, but for the Leader of our souls, and the Saviour of our life!

"Jesus, still lead on
Till our rest be won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless.
Guide us by Thy hand,
To our Fatherland."

And if He lead, every opposing force shall be crushed by His great power. This is my opening word; may it be made rich with many blessings!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A SERVICE CONDUCTED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23RD, 1869.

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou givest us our daily bread, and Thou givest us also the bread which cometh down from heaven; Thou art our life, and all our strength comes out of Thine own sufficiency. We have turned into Thine house in the midst of our daily business, that we may anticipate the Sabbath, that we may get unexpected glimpses of heaven amid our earthly care, and eat of the living bread which saves men from death. Help us to know more of life than can be taught by the world; may we see Thy life in our own; and as parents delight to trace their own features in their offspring, pointing them out with unconcealed satisfaction, so may we bear Thine image, and give Thee joy in the beauty of Thine own perfection. Giving us Thy life, do Thou also mercifully give us dominion over all the temptations and enchantments that appeal so urgently to an existence mingled of the dust of death and the fire of immortality. Thou knowest how our daily bread is made unto us a great temptation, as if man could live by bread alone, and find eternity in the productions of his own hands. Thou knowest how hard it is to be busy with the present and yet to live in the future, how almost impossible it is to make earth a tent, and think of heaven as the city. We reverse this; we think of permanence here, of tabernacling on some favourite hill, rather than of getting into the light and living in the spirit of heavenly citizenship. Take us up into Thy heart to-day; carry us in Thy great love, and we shall have rest. Speak comfortably to us, and Thy servants will bless Thee. We long for our Father; we have said with tears, When wilt Thou come unto us, not knowing that Thou wert standing over us with unchanged pitifulness, turning our very tears into blessings O thou blessed mystery, far off yet ever near at hand,

weakening us that Thou mayest give us strength, shutting our eyes that Thou mayest show us some new glory, troubling our waters that Thou mayest heal us, what shall we say of Thine unsearchable ways? Yet are we glad of their unsearchableness; our life would be poor, our heart-fires would go out, but for Thy mystery; herein is that saying true, "Man shall not live by bread alone;" he must have mystery because he must have God. Help us to live as those who see the invisible; help us to come out of eternity to do the perishing work of time. We would live in eternity; we would abide under the shadow of the Almighty; in the pavilion which Thou has built we would rest as in an inviolable place. Saviour of the world, O Lord Christ Jesus, Mighty Prince, most glorious and adorable Redeemer, come and save us; we remember Bethlehem and Calvary—Thy weakness, Thine agony and bloody sweat, the Cross on which Thou didst yield to death, and the grave in which thou didst set up the kingdom of immortality—and in these blessed memories, we triumph over sin, and lay hold on eternal life. Precious Saviour gentle friend, take our hands into Thine, let our crosses lean against Thine, include our sorrows in Thine own sufferings, so that we may no longer be our own, but Thine, Thou Saviour and Brother of the fallen world. Blessed Saviour, do not tarry; there will be no morning light in the sky until Thou dost come; suddenly come, O Saviour, and fill us with Thy blessing. Our hearts ache for Thee; they listen for the wheels of Thy chariot, and are made sore by impatient love. Yet surely Thou wilt come; Thou wilt not mock our hungering hearts; our weakness shall prevail over Thy great power. Father of our spirits, we will hold Thee until for our prayer we receive the answer of Thy grace.

Look upon Thy servants, who have left the cares of the world for an hour that they may worship Thee. Thou wilt not allow them to suffer for anything they may do for Thee; this stolen hour shall make them glad all the day, enabling them to descend upon their work in a heavenly and Divine spirit. Lord, come into the bush of our business, and make it burn with Thy presence, and speak to us from the midst of it of great deliverance from all bondage. Saviour, see the uplifting of our eyes, and open heaven, that we may look upon Thee and have life more abundantly.

The Sermon.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"
"My meat and my drink are to do the will of Him that sent me."
"Then remembered his disciples that it was written, 'The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.'"

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Do you know so little of me as to be at a loss as to the meaning of my conduct? Am I a stranger to my own mother, and a mystery to those who know me best? A hard thing it is to be living a life that is misunderstood, to have a great life measured by little standards, and great designs tried by a prudence that never trespasses well-defined limits. Some men seem to be fated to live a life of mystery; their expressions are unlike other men's; they never take the view of life or any of its manifold arrangements which is taken by those round about them; and, consequently, they are exposed to criticism and censure which they in their turn are quite unable to appreciate or understand. When Lazarus was lying at the rich man's gate, he was quite as far removed from the rich man as when they were separated by the great fixed gulf, only the distance did not appear to be so great, by reason of the treachery of the senses. The rich man would have said that the beggar was at his gate, whereas, in reality, the beggar's brightest life was already in heaven. One day we shall have a correct idea of distance. Distances will be measured not by yards and miles, but by intelligence, disposition, impulse, character; and, in that day of true measurement, who can say how widely separated even those who now compose one family may be. Jesus Christ says, "Wist ye not," in a tone partly of wonder and partly of reproach. It was somewhat of a mystery to Him that He should be a mystery to His own mother. Thus the plain things of one life are the

mysteries of another; and not until all human life is gathered up into one final and complete sonship, which it will be in heaven, shall we understand much that now baffles and surprises us. Our Father's business, then, calls us into unwonted paths; it often calls us away from those we love the best on earth; it always seems to necessitate more or less of startling and sensation on the part of general observers. There are times in our life when we must break away from the side of parents and the companionship of chosen friends, and go and enter into relations which at first sight would not seem to be necessary in the outworking of our vocation. We shall often need to say, "Wist ye not," if we live after the measure and quality of Jesus Christ's life. The explanation will often lag far behind our work. We shall often be "as a wonder unto many," and shall come to know much of the pain, and difficulty, and disappointment of being problems and bewildering puzzles to those who ought to understand and love us. Set it down as a truth, confirmed by much history, that only as we get away from common explanation, and live a life that is too deep to be fathomed by the general canons of criticism, shall we be doing a work that shall abide as a blessing through many generations.

The idea of a man starting life under the conviction that he has a Father in heaven, is most touching and instructive. According to the number of his years, Jesus Christ was but a boy when He put this inquiry to His parents. He soon realised the idea of a Supreme Fatherhood. There was an awful brevity in His childhood. Whilst others were scarcely initiated into the rudest elements of living, Jesus Christ had, so to speak, hidden Himself in the heart of God, and learned in that hiding-place how best to live amongst men. Some men come into the idea of God's Fatherhood late in life; it is about the last lesson that they learn; others come into it quite early, and thus double their life by living under the inspiration of Divine sonship. Let a man start in life with the conviction that he must be about his "Father's business," and all business will become new, and beautiful, and good. I have no faith in the vapid sentimentalism which confines what may be termed the business of God within what are known distinctively as "religious" limits. It will be a grievous error on the part of the young who hear me, if they imagine that their Father's business consists entirely of what are known as devotional exercises. It is possible that some of you may be secretly wishing that you could spend all your days in public prayer, in the hallowed engagements of the sanctuary, in preaching the Gospel, or in teaching the young; let me say to you, standing as I do in the heart of this great city on one of the busiest days

in the week, that there is not an errand-boy in the streets of London who cannot be turning his work into the business of God; all business may be made our Father's, by doing it in our Father's spirit and for our Father's glory. Do not yield yourselves to the fallacy that religion is separate and distinct from all the common engagements of life. The door-keeper in the poorest commercial establishment in this city may be doing his Father's business quite as much as the elders and angels that are around the throne. Everything depends upon your spirit. You may make the commonest duty uncommon by coming to it in a sanctified and heavenly spirit.

We who are Christians have a great advantage over those who have not known Christ, in one respect—namely, we know as well as they do what it is to be going diligently about a business that is not our Father's. We have been in the devil's service; we have received the devil's pay; we know the allurements and compensations of an earthly life; and we are bold to testify that when we have hewn out to ourselves cisterns, they have been broken cisterns that could hold no water. On the other hand, there may be some who hear me now who have no idea of what is meant by doing the business of their Father in heaven. They have always been working for themselves; they have never known the inspiration of love; they have never known the liberty of unselfishness; and it is impossible for them to pronounce any opinion upon those of us who have given ourselves to the service of our Father. We assure them, however, that they are on a wrong course, and in so assuring them we speak that we do most painfully know. Had we only heard of sin as a terrible but distant foe; had we only read of it in a professed revelation of God; had some imaginative spirit described it to us in poetic language, the case would have been entirely different; but we have actually lived in its slavery, we ourselves have been its victims, and, having known it in our own bittter experience, we bear no hesitant testimony about its exceeding sinfulness. Thanks be to God, we now know the other side; we have been called to the work of God, and in His business our very failure is success, and our weariness is rest. Strong and happy are those men whose lives are set, so to speak, in the key of God's Fatherhood. They grapple with difficulties in a manner which the world cannot understand; many a time, indeed, they get out of their difficulties some of the choicest blessings which enrich the heart, and, whether their realization of blessing is instant or not, they are enabled by a comprehensive and devout view of the manifold relations of life to assure themselves that in the end what has appeared to be against them has in reality been working out for them deliverance and triumph. Though Jesus Christ was about His Father's

business always, yet He often appeared to be given over to the power of the Tormentor; so, at least, it appears when we view His life in detachments, when we view it even at the point of the Cross. It is not until we come to Him in the glory of His resurrection that we see how all the while He has been moving onward through His Father's business to His Father's blessing.

Jesus Christ having said, in the days of His youth, that He must be about His Father's business, said also, at a later period of His life, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me." He seems in this second text to have advanced considerably in consecration. The first text might be so read as to imply an *occasional* attention to a business that was not earthly; but the second text cannot be read without forcing upon us the idea of entire absorption in the Divine mission. And is not absorption in such work the highest *reason?* There is a point in life when so-called prudence is nothing less than supreme folly. When a Christian man can deliberately consider how much Christian work he can do, and how much he can leave undone, without impairing his social relations, he knows nothing of the spirit of Jesus Christ. So long as a man lives in the low, cold region of mere duty, he lives unto himself alone. So long as he does not get out of the region of natural conscience, he does not understand the mystery of love. There is no occasion to misunderstand these words: I am not depreciating duty; I am not saying one word in disparagement of conscience. Conscience is God's monitor in the soul of man; no greater evil can befall a man, than for the sensitiveness of his conscience to be diminished in any degree. Conscience tells us what is right; conscience speaks the approving word to the well-doer; conscience may be in us as the judgment-seat of Christ. Yet is there a sense in which love is higher than duty, and diviner than conscience. Love is the absorbing power; love shuts out a man from his own view; love utterly ignores and despises all selfish considerations; love is the fulfilling of the law. Now, Jesus Christ was constantly under the inspiration of love. It was not His *duty* to die for the world; it was not at the suggestion of His *conscience* that He became obedient unto death; His incarnation, His suffering, His death, must all be explained, not by duty or by conscience, but by the great mystery of infinite love. Has God's work ever been to *us* more than our necessary food? Have we forgotten our hunger in our service? Has our thirst failed to trouble us, because we have been carried away in the ecstasy of vehement consecration to Divine purposes? Or have we had time to think much about ourselves, to measure our work, to describe our results, and to report to men the things we have attempted

for Christ? You hear what piercing questions I put to our hearts; it will be a poor thing if in the day of the Lord we be found to have flattered one another that we have been doing much, when we are justly accused of self-indulgence. If any man can say truly that his meat and his drink is to do the will of Him that sent him, he will not be slow to acknowledge that this consecration is due to the grace of God. This consecration shortens life, that is to say, our days are so consumed as to appear to us but as flying shadows; there is so much to be done, there is so much reason for doing it, there is such luxury in working for Christ, that the longest day seems but as the twinkling of an eye to the soul that burns with holy ardour for the setting up of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

"Then remembered his disciples that it was written, the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." There are different passages in the Word of God which can only be interpreted by life. We cannot come to their meaning through the grammar or lexicon. They refuse to be interpreted by the mere letter. There are passages that seem to us to belong rather to romance and ecstasy than to actual life. Sometimes, indeed, we think of them—especially when we are our lowest spiritual health—as almost *fanatical*. We speak of them as figures of speech; we do our best by carnal criticism to cool the glow of many a text; we say that it cannot mean all that it appears to mean, and count ourselves very skilful if we can bring some transcendent passage within the range of common feeling and apprehension. Do let us be careful how we attempt to explain away the enthusiasm of any Divine word. We must *live ourselves* into the meaning of some passages. You know what I mean by *living* ourselves into expositions of the Holy Word. Sometimes, through our love, we come to understand references which before had been quite inexplicable; sometimes, in the darkest hours of bodily suffering, when every stay seems to fail us, when our dearest friends are compelled to stand afar off, trembling and weeping because of their helplessness, we come to have revelations of the meaning of hard words, of which we could make nothing in the time of our strength and prosperity; sometimes, in the long-continued exercise of patience, when we think we must give up, when heart and flesh seem to fail, when our most cherished desire is fading out, we have been brought through our own endurance to know a little of the long-suffering of our Father, then have we remembered what what was written of Him and His wonderful ways. Most impressive is the idea that we may so *live* as to bring to men's minds recollections of the Divine Word, and force upon their attention positive fulfilments of passages which they had regarded as merely

metaphorical. Jesus Christ brought to the memory of His disciples the words, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." They were compelled to own that this Word alonewas truly descriptive of the life t hat He was leading, and that nothing short of so comprehensive and intense an expression could set forth a true notion of His devotedness to His Father's house. Apart from such an example, they never would have known the meaning of the word. An explanation might have been attempted in language, but the explanation would have left the subject where it found it; nothing but a life of all-consuming zeal could explain a declaration so mysterious. I venture to put this question to our hearts to-day, Is it not possible for us so to live in the varied relations which we sustain as to compel men to acknowledge that in us the Word of the Lord has been fulfilled? When men see that our life is derived from heavenly sources, that in all things we consult a Divine will, that we wait upon God, and that we wait for God, that the testimony of God is our delight and His precepts our abiding law, then will they remember that it is written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." When we are sodevoted to works of charity and philanthropy as to think nothing of ourselves; when we seek out the poor, that we may comfort them; when we go after the ignorant, carrying to them the lamp of knowledge; when we speak to the hopeless the word of encouragement; when we plan much and work heartily for the restoration of sinners, then shall men remember that it is written, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." When our earnestness is not an occasional impulse, but a constant flame; when we throw ourselves entirely into our work, as though nothing could be done without us, and as if everything depended upon the utmost strain of our powers; when we anticipate the rising of the sun, and are impatient of the darkening shadows of evening, because they hinder our Christian work; when we think and speak and labour only for the Saviour, then will men remember that it is written, "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." When we are merciful to those who have done us wrong; when we forgive our brethren seven times a day, and then are willing to forgive them seventy times seven; when we do not forgive as if we were punishing the offender; when we rise so far as we may be able to into the mystery of Divine pardon, then shall men remember that it is written, "Forgive ye everyone his brother his trespasses." When, as a Christian Church, we cultivate a spirit of mutual trustfulness; when each esteems other better than himself; when the strong delight to recover and support the weak; when the wise are patient and gentle towards those of fewer attainments; when we are careful of each other's reputation, and gentle towards one another's infirmities; when we are pitiful,

long-suffering, condescending, unsuspicious, and self-sacrificing, then will men remember that it is written, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." See, then, what a great Christian mission is set before us! The humblest believer in the Saviour can do work of this kind. We may not be great in critical exposition; we may know little or nothing of the syntax of the New Testament; we may be contemned by grammarians and linguists, yet may we be able, by the power of the Holy Ghost, so to live as to throw an explaining lustre upon hidden passages and difficult expressions.

The *young* may listen to these texts as to the supreme law of life. My young friends, do you know in your heart of hearts that you have a Father in Heaven, and that you ought to be going about His business every day? Will you from this day forth give yourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to His most blessed service? Believe me, other engagements may seem to be more profitable, as they will certainly be more congenial to the depraved taste, yet life without Christ, however glittering and successful, is but a successful delusion and a magnificent lie. "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Yet you must not be under the impression that I am asking you to undertake God's business with any expectation of reward. I do not seek to frighten you by Hell, nor do I seek to tempt you by Heaven. You will never do God's business if you do not love it. No cowards can be in God's service; no selfish aspirations can be permitted in those who labour for Christ. We can do our Father's business only after we have been crucified on the Saviour's Cross; on that Cross all that is low and selfish and unworthy must be destroyed; then shall we enter into the power of a renewed and Divine life.

The *half-hearted* may look on these words as a rebuke. We cannot conceal from ourselves that there are some in the Church who have named the Saviour's name, who have hardly at all entered into the Saviour's spirit. I know the excuses that may be pleaded. We have all had to encounter suggestions with regard to health, safety, reputation, and the like; but if we had yielded to those suggestions, we should have delivered ourselves up to the enemy. Is it enough to be religious one day in seven? Is it enough to be always receiving of the Divine bounty, and never to be returning the thanksgiving of a devoted life? You justly say that no half-hearted man can succeed in business; and what is just in secular concerns is also just in sacred engagements. Half-heartedness is failure; half-heartedness is ruin.

The *enthusiastic* may look upon these texts as an explanation and a defence of their devotedness. It is undoubtedly a pity that we have to seek for defences of our enthusiasm even in Christian service. There

are many who are ready to cool our zeal, and who seek to justify themselves by considerations that are regarded as prudential. They tell us not to kill ourselves; they tell us to remember family ties and family obligations; they tell us we should hold out as long as we possibly can. I have only to answer, that in no part of Jesus Christ's life do I find any justification of any such suggestions as these. Can you point me to a single word of Jesus Christ's which tells us to live within prudential limits, to husband our strength, and to save ourselves from the charge of fanaticism? On the contrary, it seems to me that the whole current of Jesus Christ's teaching, and the whole bent of His example, go in a contrary direction. He himself says that He must work while it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work; He says, I must work the works of Him that sent me. He was at work early in the morning; He remained late in prayer to God; He went about doing good; He lived *much*, though not *long*. It is quite possible to die young, and yet to be very old. In the epitaph, men number the years; but in the heart God sets down the measure of the work. Some men will live more in one day than other men will live in a week. Some men will live to old age, and yet die as infants who have done nothing. I believe in enthusiasm, not in half-heartedness. There is a great deal of talk about men killing themselves in God's service, but such homicide is rarely known as a fact. If those who work under the fear of killing themselves for God were to die, there would be a considerable vacancy in society, yet not much subtraction from the service that is really rendered to the world. I would urge myself to ever-increasing consecration, and I would pray those who wait on my ministry to work every hour of the day, sorry only that the day is so short for work, so noble, so Divine. We may truly say of Christianity—

> "On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm,
> Passion is reason, transport temper, here."

Gathered as we are on what is called a week-day, when all the wheels of the world's machinery are in most active motion, it may be well for me to say to some of you who have taken an hour from your secular employments, that when we lovingly look after our Father's business, our Father will not forget ours. No man serves God for nought; in that saying the devil spake that which was true. God gives us commercial ideas as well as ideas that are distinctively religious: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Our Father knows at what sacrifice some of you may have come into this sanctuary to-day; He knows where you have left your pen, your book, your weights, your

scales; and I have no hesitation in saying that if any of you have come in the true spirit of worship, and at some secular cost, God will make up to you a blessing in which you shall forget all your losses. It may be that the reason why some of you have not succeeded in business is, that you have neglected your Father's work. I do not say that this is so; I merely venture to draw your attention to this suggestion, assured as I am that no man does any work for God—especially any work that costs him any expenditure of time, property, and talent—without his receiving manifold more from his Father's hand. It is quite possible that some of you may refer me to cases in which men have made little or nothing out of their business because they were so devoted to religious work. Such cases are supposed to be anything but rare. Far be it from me to justify any man in want of diligence in his secular calling. I reprobate indolence and half-heartedness in all lawful business; and by so much as I reprobate this, I say that all loving Christian service is fruitful of reward and blessing. We must not build one duty on the ruins of another; we must follow our business with a consecration that is determined to succeed, and then offer it to our Father as a multiplication of the talent with which He at first endowed us.

I cannot but deeply feel that by so much as we realize our Father's presence in life do we enter into the enjoyment of perfect peace. After all, what is the strongest of us, but a man? What is the wisest of us, but one who has made happy conjectures as to events? We must go to our Father, if we would be complete in strength and wisdom. When we have done our little *all*, our Father must interpose, or what we have done will fail. Having done what is in our power, we may cast ourselves on the infinite sufficiency of Heaven. Our Father is on the throne, and that fact should be to us a blessed and everlasting gospel. A vessel coming across the Atlantic was suddenly struck in the darkness of midnight by a terrible wind; she shivered and reeled under the stroke; in an instant all her passengers and crew were thrown into consternation and dismay; on every hand there were signs of confusion and alarm. In the midst of all, the captain's little girl awoke, and, raising herself, sweetly inquired, "Is father on deck?" and, on being hurriedly told that he was, the trustful little creature peacefully returned to her slumber and dreams. I would be as that little girl. Darkness and storm and loss will surely befall me, yet, amid the gloom and the floods and the ruin, I would ask, "Is Father on deck?" and, being assured that God was with me, I would rest in the peace of faith. Even the winds and the seas obey our Father's voice; the sea supports the steps of our Father when He comes to us in the night of tempest and sorrow; and when He is in the vessel, it is impossible to be overwhelmed.

Let us now return to the crowded street, and to the duties and anxieties of our daily calling, lovingly yielding ourselves to the infinite care of our Father, and doing His business with both hands. That all-comprehending, never-ceasing business will tax our highest powers, yet our weariness shall draw upon us some tenderer blessing, and when we are least in our own eyes, by reason of conscious insufficiency, we shall be very precious in our Father's sight. Make your desk an altar; turn your business into a means of grace; let your counting-house be a sanctuary; and then heaven will be but the natural climax of your Christian progress.

NOTE.—I wish it to be clearly understood that the Sermons in *The City Temple* are not literary Essays; most earnestly do I wish them to retain the effect of strong, urgent, loving talk concerning JESUS CHRIST and His kingdom. They may be angular, rapid in their transitions, and abrupt in appeal, yet they may do more good than if they were prepared as polished shafts. Smooth preaching never does any good; few people care to hear it, and no people can possibly remember it. Would to God I could say how deeply I abhor *made* sermons! I view them as abominations and wickednesses; as poisonous confectionery, which may indeed make a living for the confectioner, but spread death among the people. I pray to be saved from ever making a *fine* sermon, a *beautiful* sermon, a *sweet* sermon, a *lovely* sermon. I wish to speak after the manner of JESUS CHRIST himself, with His incorruptible devotion to truth, His unutterable pity for sinners, His implacable dislike of Pharisaism, cant, hypocrisy, and devilism in general, and with His all-constraining, inextinguishable, omnipotent love.

The City Temple.

Report of a Discourse Delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, October 7th, 1869.

The Revival of Religion.

"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"—Ps. lxxxv. 6.

It is well known that many Christians have come to have a distaste for the word "revival" when used with reference to religious work. I confess that to some extent I share that distaste. There has been so much exaggeration, so much fanatical excitement, and so much transient profession, that I cannot wonder at the revulsion which many sober-minded Christians feel when they hear the very word "revival." I believe that all got-up revivals are bad. You cannot organize a true revival; you cannot treat spiritual influences as fixed quantities; as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so, often, is that sudden, profound, and irresistible impulse which rouses the Church, and breaks in beneficently upon the deadly slumber and delusive security of the world. As a matter of fact, there have been extraordinary visitations of Divine influence; there have been seasons when the Holy Ghost has made the earthquake, the fire, the rending wind, and the stormy tempest His ministers, and when men have been shaken with a wholesome fear, not knowing the way, yet feeling the nearness of the Lord. There have been great birthdays in the Church, days on which thousands have been crucified with Jesus Christ, and multitudes have begun to sing loudly and lovingly His praise. There *have been* days of high festival in the sanctuary, when the silver trumpets have sounded, when prodigals

have come back to sonship, when shepherds have returned with recovered flocks, when women have found the piece that was lost, and the dead have risen to immortal life. There have, too, been times when the people have realized with special vividness the personality and life-giving power of the Holy Ghost; when they have had the keys of interpretation wherewith to unlock the boundless treasures of the Divine word; when prayer was as the speech of love that never wearies; when the Sabbath shed its sacred glory over all the days of the week; when God's house shone with heavenly lustre, and all life throbbed in joyful harmony with the purposes of God. I refer to these things as to matters of fact, and in doing so I wish to know whether such delights cannot be more permanently secured. At the same time let me clearly say that we could not bear the strain of an ecstatic life; we are not constituted for constant rapture; we have to contend with the deceitfulness of the flesh; we have to fight and suffer upon the earth when the spirit would gladly escape on the wings of the morning to untroubled and hallowed scenes. Still, there is danger in supposing that because we cannot always live at the highest point of spiritual enthusiasm, we may be content with low attainments, or with a neutrality which attracts no attention to itself. Now there is something between the flame of a blazing ecstasy and the grey ashes of a formal profession; there is a steady and penetrating *glow* of piety, there is a *fervour of love*, there is an animated intelligence, a zealous affection, a godly yearning for personal progress and social evangelization, which, when found together, make up a life of delight in God and blessed service for men. To promote this realization I ask your attention to a few suggestions of whose value you can quickly form a sound opinion.

First of all, I am more and more assured that, as individual Christians, and as churches of Jesus Christ, *we need to be very clear in our doctrinal foundations.* Do let us get a distinct idea of the principal points in the Christian faith. Beginning with the doctrine of sin, let us strive after God's view of it. To Him sin is infinitely hateful; He cannot tolerate it with the least degree of allowance; it troubles His otherwise perfect and happy universe; it despoils human nature; it overthrows all that is divine in manhood; it calls into existence the worm that gnaws for ever; it is the cause of death and the source of hell. To underestimate the heinousness of sin is to put ourselves out of the line of God's view; to understand sin is to understand redemption. Sin interprets the Cross; sin shows what is meant by God's love. Have we, as individuals and churches, lost the true notion of sin? Is it no longer infinitely abominable to us? Is it toned down to something almost indistinguishable? I take it upon me, as a Christian teacher, to say that we cannot be right

in our relation to Jesus Christ, we cannot be just to His holy Cross, until we regard sin with unutterable repugnance, until we rise against it in fiery indignation, fighting it with all the energy of wounded love, and bringing upon it the damnation of concentrated and implacable anger. I am not speaking of what are called great sins; I am not thinking of murder, of commercial plunder, of adultery, drunkenness, or theft; I am speaking of sin as sin, sin nestling secretly in the heart, sin rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, sin indulged in secret places, sin perverting the thought, sin poisoning the love, sin sucking out the life-blood of the soul; I am thinking of *sin*, not of *sins*—of the fact, not of the details; and I ask, with passionate yet well-considered pointedness, Have we not been led to underestimate the guilt of sin?

Out of a true knowledge of sin will come a true appreciation of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. Apart from this, He will be a strange teacher; with it, He will be the Redeemer for whom our hearts have unconsciously longed when they have felt the soreness and agony of sin. Brethren, I could sum up my creed in a sentence, yet that sentence contains more than all the libraries in the world. My short but all-including creed, the faith which bears me up above all temptation and all controversy, the faith in which I destroy the power of the world, and soar into the brightness of eternal day, is this: I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD! My heart hungers for Him, my sin cries out for His mercy, my sorrow yearns for His coming, and when He does come He speaks just the word that my soul needs; He understands me; He knows me altogether; He can get down into the low, dark pit into which sin has thrown me; He draws me to His Cross, He hides my sins in His Sacrifice, He shows me how God can be honoured, yet the sinner forgiven; He destroys the devil, and puts within me the Holy Ghost; He so fills me with life that death has no longer any terror with which to affright me. I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD; His word is the best witness of its own power; it touches life at every point; it is most precious when most needed; it goes into our business, and lays down the golden rule; it follows us in our wanderings, and bids us return; it is always pure, noble, unselfish, unworldly; it gives us a staff for the journey, a sword for the battle, a shelter from the storm, and in the last darkening hour it gives us the triumph of immortality. This is the witness of ten thousand times ten thousand histories. I do not wonder at worldly or dead-hearted men calling this declamation: to *them* it *is* declamation; to them, indeed, it is madness; yet can we, who have known what it is to have Christ coming to us through all our sin, say of a truth that, when we are most mad, we are most wise,—the ecstasy of love is the reason of faith.

If we lay firmly hold of these two points, viz., the sinfulness of sin, and the work of Jesus Christ, we shall come to know what is meant by what I have ventured to call the *glow* of piety. Only the liberated slave can know the joy of freedom—only the recovered leper can appreciate fully the blessing of health. Let an emancipated slave tell of the joys of liberty, and the man who has never felt the grip of a shackle will at once pronounce him a declaimer; let a recovered leper say all he can of the delights of health, and the man who has never known a day's sickness will probably think him more or less of a fool. It is so with our preaching, or with our true Christian living; it is not set in the common key of the world; it cannot be judged by the rules of carnal criticism; when it is praised as regular, thoughtful, prudent, let us beware, lest under these flattering names be hidden a deep, yet almost unconscious apostasy. I am by these strong words seeking to point out as the only solid basis of a genuine revival of religion the need of being distinct and positive in our faith. Let us know what we believe. Let us be able to say with sureness and thankfulness what is the Rock on which we stand.

Don't say that I am clipping the wings of mental freedom; don't charge me with narrowness or sectarianism; only be on the Rock, and you shall have upward scope enough; only be sure about Jesus Christ as at once the Interpreter of sin, and the Saviour of sinners, and you may fly far on the wings of fancy; you may bring gems from many a mine, and flowers from many a garden. You may have your own way of saying things, you may speculate, and suggest, and discuss, only never turn sin into a flippant riddle, and never set up the Saviour as a mere conundrum in theology. Are we thoroughly at one of these two points? Do we know sin in its essential, unchangeable loathsomeness—do we love Jesus Christ as the only, the Almighty, and the ever-blessed Saviour? Then, out of this should come an intense fervour of piety. We should have strength here; we should come back to these points from all the wanderings of fancy, and all the bewilderments of temptation; we should hasten to these doctrines when the anxieties of religious thought are heavy upon us; we should publish these doctrines in explanation and defence of an enthusiasm which must appear as madness to those who have not seen the unseen or felt the power of an endless life. Believe me, to have one strong point of faith is of more consequence than to enjoy the most splendid speculations, which vanish like an enchanted dream when touched by the realities of sorrow and death. To you, young and ardent hearers, let me particularly, and with most anxious love, address a word of caution. There are not wanting men who will tell you that it is of little or no

consequence what you believe. To the young mind this is very pleasant it saves trouble, it leaves conscience untouched, it looks like liberty. Let me speak strongly yet soberly about this teaching. I have examined it, I have seen its effects on many men, I have watched its general results, and I am prepared to characterize it as a *lie.* Observe the word,—it is a *lie;* you won't have any difficulty in understanding the word,—it is a *lie;* you won't have any difficulty in remembering the word,—it is a *lie;* you will not mistake the word for any other,—it is a *lie.* I do not hesitate to teach that faith is the very root of life. What a man most deeply *believes*, that he most truly *is.* All earnest life is but a working out of earnest conviction No man can live a deep, true, great life who lives upon the chances of the day, without convictions, without purposes, without principles on which he is prepared to risk the whole issue and destiny of his life. You will, after all, leave much unsettled; you will not encroach one iota upon the liberty of any man; you will still hold your mind open to receive new impressions, new visions of truth new aspects of duty; yet you will have no standing-place, no home, no, rest, until you can say with the love and fire of your heart, I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

In the next place, having a distinct idea of what we truly believe, we must have *a public ministry which is faithful to the spirit and demands of Jesus Christ.* I would speak with great caution upon this point, so far as personal methods of ministry are concerned. I would not, on such an occasion as this, be the teacher of my brethren. Every man must preach in the way that to him is best, most powerful, and most useful. What I wish to say is, that all Christian ministers are called to be faithful to Jesus Christ *in seeking the salvation of men.* I would lift up my voice most determinedly against the continuation of mere controversy. In my view of ministerial life, there is too much attention paid in the pulpit to controversial subjects. We must not think it our duty to give public importance to every imp who speaks the language of hell with a new accent. We have a great *positive* work to do. We have *affirmative* truths to teach. We have to cast out devils, not by controversy, but by divinely-revealed and authoritative truths. If we wish to take our part in the controversies of the world, the press is at our service; in the pulpit let us preach the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and mightily plead with man to repent and believe the Gospel. There is scope enough for all our powers. We shall have to acquaint ourselves deeply with human nature; we shall have to read the heart until we know its devices, imaginations, and cunning deceits; we shall have to study the power of sin in the soul; we shall have to suffer with Jesus Christ; we shall have to inquire diligently into God's righteousness,

mercy, and love ; night and day we shall have to study the mystery of Redemption, and in doing all these things our every power will be absorbed and exhausted. If now and again, specially for the benefit of young men, we may have occasion to refer to controversies, let the reference be made with the lofty earnestness of men who are intent upon the salvation of those who hear us. We must not throw off the old words—Repentance, Faith, Salvation ; and the things that they signify must be the very life-blood of our ministry. In any genuine revival of interest in Christianity, there must be a revived interest in a preached gospel. The sanctuary will be thronged, and the thronging listeners will be justly impatient of everything that does not bear immediately and intensely upon the salvation of men. In the course of my ministry, now extending over seventeen years, I have had occasion to adapt myself to changing methods of thought and expression. I have been tempted to modernise Christian preaching, to give up old names, and adopt new ones, and to resort to various plans of persuading men to become Christians ; and to-day I bear witness that all the good which I have heard of in connection with my ministry has been, more or less, distinctly traceable to old methods, and old words, and old doctrines, and old expostulations. God seems to have given nothing to my modernised gospel, to my newly-labelled preparations, but to have set special honour upon the old ways in which our fathers trod with so firm and progressive a step. We sometimes talk of adapting our preaching to the age in which we live, of keeping it abreast with contemporary culture, and addressing ourselves to the habits of men of taste. In all this there may be truth enough barely to save it from the charge of insanity. My deepening impression is that, however we may modify our manner, the doctrine which is adapted to all ages, to all tastes, to all circumstances, is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Then must we be made to feel that the doctrines of the gospel are humbling doctrines ; that they smite down our natural pride and self-trustfulness, that they kill before they make alive ; that out of our utter impoverishment and nothingness they bring all that is distinctive and enduring in Christian manhood. Black will be the day, disastrous the hour, in which the gospel is pared down to meet the notions of any men. The gospel is less than nothing, if it be not the grandest revelation of the heart of God to the heart of man ; and being a revelation, it must of necessity be clothed with an authority peculiarly emphatic and decisive. I cannot see that ministers of the gospel are at liberty to talk with opponents on equal grounds. I do not look upon Christianity as being merely the *plus* of argument set against argument in contention with unbelievers. I believe the gospel to be God's

answer to human sin and human sorrow; and if any man ask where is its authority, I answer, "The blind do see; the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised to life." Christian living is the best explanation of Christian believing; Christianity is the best explanation of Christianity; and more preaching is the best answer to more opposition. I am confirmed in the opinion that we should devote ourselves with increasing earnestness to seeking the salvation of men, when I look at the character of our general congregations. We address the public, not a select few; we speak to men whose whole time is engrossed in worldly engagements; we speak to the poor, the unlearned, the sorrowing; we address the young, the careless, the worldly; and to such there is nothing that can be preached that will so instantly touch the heart as the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God. Let us, then, as chosen ministers of Jesus Christ, as men in whose hearts is reigning the Holy Spirit, seek the salvation of them that hear us, and despise every reward but the honour of turning many to righteousness.

Whilst there will be this full and bold proclamation of evangelical doctrine in the pulpit, there will be a system of *teaching* proceeding more privately. I believe thoroughly in sound, critical, extensive teaching. Some men have a peculiar gift in Biblical teaching; and those men should be encouraged to pursue their laborious but most necessary vocation. The preacher and teacher should be fellow-labourers. The preacher should collect men into great companies, arrest their attention by earnest and convincing statements of Christian truth, and then pass them on, so to speak, to the critical and patient teacher. Thus the man of God will become thoroughly furnished;—having received deep instruction, he will be able to give a reason for the faith and hope that are in him, and he will be strong to resist the importunities of those who are driven about by every wind of doctrine. I believe that we have had unjust and unreasonable expectations respecting the ministry. We have looked for all sorts of work from ministers; they have been expected to be eloquent preachers, popular lecturers, learned writers, acceptable visitors, skilled controversialists, successful beggars, untiring evangelists, and many other important and influential characters. This is the covetousness that tends to poverty. Let a man be one thing, and let him excel in it. My own life-long, fervent, never-changing wish is to be a preacher of the Gospel; I wish the Christian pulpit to be my world; in it I would work as a willing servant, and in it I would die like a soldier sword in hand. Another brother is a teacher, learned, critical, and patient with slow scholars; another is blessed with a high pastoral gift, by which he can make himself as an angel of God in the

family; another is a ready writer, who can fascinate the eye of taste, or convince the stubborn-minded: be it so; it is right, it is best. When Christian truth and Christian feeling revive amongst us, we shall be as the heart of one man, each magnifying God in the other. I am persuaded we shall all be wanted; the trumpet, the flute, the organ, the stringed instrument—the soldier, the physician, the teacher—the orator, the scholar, the poet—the strong man, the gentle woman, the tender child—all will be wanted; and the only strife amongst us will be who can do most and do it best for the Lamb that was slain!

I have heard of a great musical composer who was conducting a rehearsal by four thousand performers; all manner of instruments were being played, all parts of music were being sung. In one of the grand choruses which shivered through the vast building like a wind from heaven, the keen-eared conductor suddenly threw up his *baton* and exclaimed, "Flageolet!" In an instant the performance ceased. One of the flageolet players had stopped; something was wanting to the completeness of the performance, and the conductor would not go on. It shall be so in the Church. Jesus Christ is conducting His own music. There is indeed a vast volume of resounding harmony rolling upwards towards the anthems which fill the heavens; yet if one voice is missing He knows it; if the voice of a little child has ceased He notes the omission; He cannot be satisfied with the mightiest billow which breaks in thunder round His throne, so long as the tiniest wavelet falls elsewhere. *Flageolet*, where is thy tribute? Pealing *trumpet*, He awaits thy blast; sweet *cymbals*, He desires to hear your silvery chime; mighty *organ*, unite thy many voices in deepening the thunder of the Saviour's praise! And if there be one poor sinner here who thinks his coarse tones would be out of harmony with such music, let him know that Jesus Christ refines every tribute that is offered in love, and harmonises the discords of our broken life in the music of His own perfection.

There is one feature in our public Christian life which I should like to see more fully brought out; I mean *the bearing of individual testimony on behalf of Jesus Christ.* By no means seek to supplant what is known as the regular ministry, but supplement it; and at all costs destroy the impression that nobody has a good word to say for Christianity except its paid teachers. Such an impression is, of course, at all times utterly and most cruelly false; yet there is a possibility of so enlarging and strengthening our testimony as to secure the happiest results. Why should not the banker, the great merchant, and the eminent lawyer say publicly what God has done for their souls? If the Prime Minister of England, if the Lord Chancellor, if the judge upon the bench, if the

well-known senators would openly testify on behalf of Jesus Christ, they might produce the deepest possible impression for good. Such a testimony would destroy the slanderous and blasphemous notion that Christianity is not adapted to the strength, the culture, and the advancement of the present day. It would arrest the attention of genius; it would infuse a new tone into the conversation of the highest circles; it would supply novel material for newspaper comment. Instead of the venal headings of newspaper articles, suppose we saw such headings as these—Mr. GLADSTONE, on the Forgiveness of Sins; The LORD CHANCELLOR, on the Nature of Christian Faith; Mr. BRIGHT, on the Personality and Work of the Holy Ghost; LORD CAIRNS, on the Way of Salvation. Of course I know the ready answer of many. We shall be told that this would be "sensationalism;" but let us beware lest the devil find in that alarming word one of his easiest victories over Christian duty and Christian courage. Is it not high time that there *should* be sensationalism? Have we not been troubled with indifference long enough? Has not Jesus Christ become a merely historical name in many quarters? Terrified by the impotent bugbear of sensationalism; hushed into criminal silence by the possible charge of sensationalism; frightened into holes and corners lest anybody should cry "sensationalism;" living tamely, dastardly, shamefacedly, because there is such a word as sensationalism! Is this manly on our part, or true, or just, or grateful? If this be sensationalism, how comes it to be so? Is it not by contrast with long-continued indifference, with cruel silence, with unholy self-indulgence? Could we not soon put an end to the charge of sensationalism, by the strength, the constancy, the ardour of our consecration! Sensationalism is a momentary cry—we may silence it by life-long continuance in well-doing.

I see no reason why we should not have what I may call a SERVICE OF TESTIMONY in this place of worship, say once a month or once a quarter. Let the Service of Testimony be held on a week-day; let those who are willing to speak a word for the Saviour communicate with me, that all things may be done decently and in order; let the banker, the merchant, the lawyer, the artizan, the labourer say what has been the effect of their reception of Christianity; let us have messages from the family, the workshop, the barracks, the dockyards, the warehouse, and all the highways of life, and there shall go forth an influence for good which no imagination can conceive. Can anyone give me a sensible reason why such a Service of Testimony should not be held? Don't dismiss the subject as impracticable; there is nothing impracticable to determined love. I do not despair of seeing this suggestion carried out most impressively; and if so, what a supplement of ministerial service will it be!

From the ministry we shall receive full and instructive expositions of doctrine, and from all sections of the Church we shall receive personal illustrations of the power of godliness in the life. There is much in living speech which cannot be felt in silent example; many who have no opportunity of seeing the latter might hear the former. And this supplement we do really need. Let those who have social, political, literary, and commercial influence throw it boldly and earnestly into the cause of Jesus Christ; it is but common justice; having received much they owe much; and as the time of payment is brief—alas, how brief! a shadow, a hurrying wind—let them be prompt if they would be just.

The time allotted for this service will not allow me much further elaboration. I have spoken of our having a distinct knowledge of what we believe, and of our preaching, so as to secure the salvation of men. Now I want "signs following." I await your answer. Will you who are full of sin and sorrow throw yourselves at the Saviour's Cross, and cry mightily, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Wait there until you receive the forgiveness of your sins. Don't yield to any suggestions to go elsewhere. You will know that you have received the answer when your hearts are filled with a deep, joyful, unspeakable peace. Will you who have long borne the Saviour's name carry the banner of your profession more loftily, more steadily, and more humbly? Will you who preach the Gospel give your nights and days to deeper, tenderer communion with Jesus Christ, desiring of Him the all-including gift of the Holy Ghost? Will you who are in business live in the spirit of the golden rule? Will you who are heads of houses walk before your families in the fear and love of God? I seek thus for signs following! I cannot willingly allow the service to pass without some good result. Are you forming the holy vow? In your heart of hearts are you renewing your covenant with the Saviour? I seek thus for signs following! I would not spend my strength for nought; I would reap thus early; I would have instant recompense; I would increase God's seals of my ministry. Let me see the Word of the Lord prospering; let me know that Christ is gathering many spoils; tell me that the Cross of the Saviour is still able to draw men's hearts, and to hold them for ever by the omnipotence of love.

NOTE.

The THURSDAY SERVICE will continue to be held from week to week, commencing at TWELVE o'clock, and never occupying more than one hour. It should be understood that persons are quite at liberty to listen for a few minutes, and then return to their daily engagements; the Service will, in this respect, be considered as quite different from our usual Sunday worship. It has to me been a great delight to see the banker, the merchant, the clerk, the policeman, the postman, the errand-boy, and the wayfarer, giving attention to this mid-week Service. Who can tell into what new and distant fields the incorruptible seed of the Divine Kingdom may thus be carried? In considering the renewed proposition to exchange Manchester for London, the hope of establishing such a service in the very centre of the metropolis determined my decision. I had great misgivings about Sunday work, but a very strong conviction that something could be done, in such a city as London, on a week-day, throughout the whole of my prolonged and most anxious thought upon the proposed change this conviction recurred again and again, and eventually was allowed to decide the difficult controversy. There must be great numbers of people in London who would be glad of an hour's relief from the pressure of business; there must also be great numbers of people in the suburbs who would be thankful to avail themselves of a public Christian Service in the middle of the week. I am not without hope that many who come occasionally to the City for various purposes may be led to make Thursday their City day, that they may avail themselves of an opportunity of joining in the public worship of Almighty God. As was said in the opening sermon, there will not be any attempt to get up discourses upon uncommon or sensational subjects; there will be reverent worship, and a loving word spoken for Jesus Christ. In these methods of doing good my faith increases day by day. I cannot but feel gratified by the large attendance of ministers of all denominations, yet this attendance may become to me a temptation that ought to be strenuously resisted. I shall not preach to ministers as a special class; I shall not choose subjects in which ministers may be thought to be specially interested; my stedfast aim is to preach the Gospel of God, our Saviour, with an earnestness that knows nothing of human fear and a simplicity which carries with it its own best interpretation. In adopting this course I shall have the hearty sanction of all my brethren in the ministry who have outlived the juvenile desire to be inaccessibly lofty and unfathomably profound.

Let me ask for much sympathy and prayer in relation to the THURSDAY SERVICE. It can in no way justly interfere with Christian work in other churches. It may stimulate and enrich many; happily, it can impair none. If this note should come under the attention of any men of leisure who are willing to assist in various arrangements incidental to such a service, I shall be most thankful for their co-operation. Let them communicate with any of the deacons at once. With such a platform and such a Gospel, who can say where the influence for good will cease? Already I have been encouraged by instances of unexpected honour in

preaching the Word. I accept them with reverence, as special gifts of God. Some of my brethren, too, have most kindly volunteered to announce the Service. This I take as a most valuable mark of favour, and I am deeply thankful for it. In the very centre of London, preaching on a week-day, of course we must be more or less dependent on all suburban congregations. In this way I would be the willing co-pastor of all my brethren, labouring with them heart and soul in making Jesus Christ more widely and deeply known. The manner in which many of my brethren have been pleased to refer to this Service, has drawn forth my most cordial love to them. I thank them for their encouraging words, and pray God for them that they may be enriched with all grace in their divine and most arduous vocation.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, September 26th, 1869.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, how can we thank Thee for this sweet light of the Sabbath-day? We would accept it as Thy benediction, and as a call to ourselves to arise and shine, for our light is come. From the glory of Thine own eternity Thou dost clothe the morning with brightness, and the evening with the lustre of stars. Thou art light, and in Thee is no darkness at all; and where Thou art, there is no night. Thou art the glory of the heavens. We would remember that Thou callest Thy children to be children of the light and of the day; we would hear in the voice of the day a call to our own moral lustre and peace. May we remember that as Christ is the light of the world, so hath He made us also to be lights of our generation; may we not put our light under a bushel, but so set it before men, that they may see it and be blest! Teach us the responsibility of having light; teach us that they that walk in the day should not stumble; and enable us to be sober, abandoning the darkness of the night, and walking as those upon whom a great light has risen. O Sun of righteousness, Mystery of fire, and light, and beauty, may we dwell under Thy wings, and shed forth in holy reflection Thine own brightness! We find it easy to thank Thee for light in the summer morning; our mouth is filled with laughter; in the time of unshaded glory, we find it easy to sing; Thy light makes us tuneful; the fulness of Thy blessing stirs our praises, and it is easy to say, in the noontide of honour and prosperity, "It is the Lord." Thou knowest how we shrink from the shadows which are gathered oftentimes in the firmament of Thy providence. When Thou dost gather the thunder-cloud around Thee, then do we tremble, as if Thou hadst forgotten to be gracious; and if Thou causest a storm to arise upon the sea, then we fear as those who have no

Father. Lord, help us to show a Christian, filial love, triumphant in the time of shadow and darkness, and trouble and loss, and in the night of our suffering do Thou give us songs of hope. Thus shall the light and the darkness be full of God, and the morning and the evening shall be as day; and whether we are praising Thee for Thy goodness, or bending with trustful submission under the chastisement of Thy rod, Thy glory shall be revealed in us, and men shall know us as the sons of God.

We have occasion to bless Thee for every shadow which Thou hast sent us. If we had always lived in the heat of summer, we should have become full of plague and full of death; but Thou didst attemper the light and the air, Thou didst constitute Thyself the minister of our souls, and even when Thy winds have been cold and bitter, and Thy presence has been far removed from us, Thou wert teaching us lessons which could not be learned in summer, and which no joy could ever teach us. We remember the hardness of the discipline by which we have been trained; we remember our disappointments, our sufferings under the strife of tongues, our hidden sorrows in the chamber of affliction and in the sanctuary of death; we remember the blighting of our hopes, and the unexpected hushing of our songs; we remember when the staff broke in our hand, and when our poor strength gave way, as we lay down under the juniper-tree, desiring rather to die than to live. We said in such dark hours that our days were vanity and our nights a torment; we said, the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, and there is no song in our mouth. Yet now we bless Thee for the stormy day and the starless night; we thank Thee that many a staff has broken in our hand and pierced us; we thank Thee that Thou hast occasionally barked our fig-tree; we bless Thee for the darkness Thou hast sent, for we have heard Thy voice in the cloud. So are we to-day stronger and nobler and truer, by reason of Thy providences alike of judgment and of mercy, and we have come as a trained band, smitten and bruised, and yet blest with innumerable benedictions, to make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation. We should have lifted towards Thy throne faces unstained with sorrow, unmarked by traces of weariness, but for our great sin. God be merciful unto us sinners. O Mighty Prince and Saviour, Son of God, Lamb of God, Only Begotten of the Father, Thou lovest sinners, Thou receivest sinners still; Thou wilt not drive us away from Thy mercy-seat when we cry, "Lord, forgive our sins!" We have offended Thee with manifold offences; we have been cruel to Thee, as if with malignant determination to wound Thy gentle heart. We have been cowardly in our Christian testimony, poor in our Christian service, selfish even in our religious considerations. But for Thy mercy, broader than the earth, higher than the heavens, more enduring than our own

life, we should surely die; but the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanseth from all sin. That we may now feel its cleansing power is our heart's desire unto God. We would be more than pardoned. Thou wilt do exceeding abundantly above pardoning us; Thou wilt even make us holy after Thine own perfection; Thou wilt take our sins away as if they had never been, and cast them for ever into the depth of the sea. This is our joy and this our triumph over the devil. Thou wilt make us without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, so that the signature of the devil shall not be found upon us at all; our sins will be forgotten, and Thy great mercy will shine in our imperishable holiness. Sanctify us then, O Holy Spirit, and we shall be holy. Teach us the mystery of holiness; we know nothing of it; we have but heard of holiness. Do Thou lead us into understanding what is meant by the purity of God. Help us to hate sin with infinite and unquenchable hatred; may we abhor that which is evil, and may all evil men find our presence a judgment upon them, and feel that we torment them whilst we are in their sight. Help us to torment with infinite torture all evil spirits, all devils, all hellish dispositions; may those who have them and suffer from them cry out to us by reason of our holiness, "What have we to do with you, ye sons of God?" Thus make us preachers of the truth, signs and testimonies on behalf of righteousness, and may those who are doing evil fear us, and those who are doing well be made glad in the light of our countenance. We all want blessings; there is hunger in every heart; there is a void in every nature. O Thou dear, gentle Christ, who didst carry the fulness of the Godhead bodily, fill us with Thy fulness, and we shall be satisfied. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON THE CALLING OF SAMUEL.

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth. And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."—1 Samuel, iii. 1—18.

"Samuel was laid down to sleep, and the Lord called Samuel." God calls men at unlikely times. The child is gone to rest, to forget in sleep the weariness of the day, and when he goes into the quietness of his own retreat, thinking that the day's work is all over, God calls

him. There is no night with God; He shines through the everlasting day. What I wish to remember is this, that He has no set times, and formal periods, and prescribed seasons in which to speak to men. I want to learn from this text—as I have inferred from many passages in my own life—somewhat of what may be termed the *unlikelinesses* of God. Here He is calling a child at an unlikely time. When we may say, "Let us be quiet now, the child has gone to rest; let nothing disturb the young slumberer," God comes along the pathway of the darkness, and speaks to the child. And if we had an ear to hear we should not be slow to perceive that God speaks to ourselves at unlikely times. You say, now this is a likely morning in which God will speak to us. We are gathered from many quarters into His house of prayer, and we are here waiting to know what God the Lord will say; and yet it is quite possible we may go away from this chosen place without hearing anything. And sometimes, when we think God a long way off, and we have our own little circle of thought and speculation—when we are apparently given up to ourselves—God will come unexpectedly to us, and call us and talk to us, and strike through our souls mysteries and counsels that will make us tremble, and wonder, and pray. So be prepared, if you can, for unlikely visitations from God; do not say that any time is unlikely to Him; it is only unlikely because of our limited vision and false estimate of things; He is always speaking, only sometimes our ear is waxed heavy that we cannot hear. Here is a great king: he is going to make merry with a thousand of his lords; he is going to light up the banqueting hall, and give himself up to revel, and pleasure, and madness—going to live in the light of his own splendour. And the programme opens and proceeds with marked success; there is light, there is music, there is laughter, there is joy; and just then when the effect is most splendid, a mysterious hand writes along the wall of his festal chamber words he cannot understand. Just then the ghost gets into his banquet; that hand that nobody can touch, and whose writing nobody can read, that hand torments and destroys the pleasure of the whole scene. It was an unlikely time, but God does come in so. He comes into our wedding feast and into our merrymakings, into our holiday, in the time of our jubilation, when the silver trumpet is put to our lips, when the joy-bells are ringing around us, and when we say, Now there is nothing but gladness, and mirth, and beauty, and pleasure. He sends in that ghostly, spectral, all-tormenting hand, that "something between a thought and a thing," which makes us shiver, which chills our marrow, and spills from our palsied hands the wine of joy which we were quaffing. God comes, then, let us know, at unlikely times; comes upon the child when he is sleeping; and comes upon the great king in

the time of his intoxication. Here, too, is a man—called at least by courtesy a man—who is saying to himself—fit auditor, indeed—"This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and I will say to my soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" and just as he has concluded that monologue, a voice, terrible as the hand that Belshazzar saw, says to him from a hidden place, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee"—an unlikely time. Are we poor creatures not living for the time when we can build our barns greater, and say something comforting to our souls, and when we have laboured, and struggled, and toiled, and suffered, and just got what we wanted, God calls us fools, and sends us away? If we do not speak comfortably to our souls until we speak to them of barns being built greater, we shall suddenly come into the night of judgment and damnation. We call these breaks in our life *sudden;* but has it not been truly said that all things come suddenly to the blind? It is because we are blind that we feel sudden changes in life; if we knew the nearness, and measured the wisdom of God, we should know that suddenness has no place in the all-embracing government of God. To us, indeed, by reason of our short-sightedness, there are unexpected transitions and combinations, and such are necessary features in the experience of finite creatures; but to God, there is a touch of eternity in every moment of time. Jesus Christ warned His disciples of unlikely times; He said, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." All great crises are more or less unexpected; where calculation ceases surprise begins, and as our calculation can never keep pace with the far-reaching movements of God, what if again and again we should be found in the attitude of men who have been astounded and silenced by a great surprise? Jesus says that the strong man did not know the thief's hour, or he would have been prepared to protect his goods; it is said that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; and the exhortation founded upon these suddennesses in the Divine movement (suddennesses to our short vision) is an exhortation to readiness to receive the Lord.

"And the child Samuel ministered, and the Lord called Samuel." We proceed, you observe, from *unlikely times* to *unlikely persons*—the child ministered, and the Lord called Samuel. We speak of unlikely persons; but, after all, what do we know about unlikeliness in any of God's ministers? May the master not call what servants he pleases? Who are we that we should build our little gates, and double-lock them, and bolt them high and low, and watch them, and demand tickets of admission? Who are we that we should have weights and standards by which to test the Lord's sons? If it pleases the Lord to smite a king-

dom by the hand of a child, who are we that we should demand a more proportionate instrument? If it pleases the Lord to direct the thoughts of a generation by means of an agency which we would contemn, who is right, the Infinite or the worm—the everlasting fire, or a flickering insect of the night? Let us be very careful how we talk about men who are called to speak God's revelations. If he calls an obscure man to do His work, what is obscurity unto the Lord? One ray of His glory, and the obscurity perishes; one elevation of His hand, and no pedestal of ours can reach the immeasurable eminence. God calls unlikely persons to do His work. We should have said, "Now, seeing that there is a very painful communication to be made to this aged prophet, get some old, experienced man to break the tidings to him, so to adapt the message that the venerable prophet may not be overwhelmed; it must be done prudently, with much measurement of tone and communication." So *we* should say; but God says, "Child, I want thee;" He puts into the child His terrible revelation, and the child speaks it. It is God's delight to make the last first, and the first last; and He has always been working so as to set the stone which the builders rejected at the head of the corner. He will not have our greatness; He will not be put under any obligation by our strength. He delights to take up the straw blown of the wind, and to beat down great fortresses by the unlikely weapon. And so with regard to us. Is there any person here who is saying, "I cannot do anything with God's revelation; I have had but a poor education; I have had no social advantages; nobody knows my name; what can I do?" Let me say to the little girl and the little boy, God can make use even of you. The dew-drop is God's, as well as the great sea. He can make use of you; what you have to do is to say to Him, "Lord, just make me what Thou pleasest." That is all He wants; and through your little faculties, your little power, He can send His messages of mercy and His denunciations of judgment; and so the poorest of us can be God's ministers. Do not despise the humblest ministry. God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. Yes, and more than that; we can follow Him to that point; We can say, "We understand this in part;" but after that He turns round upon us, and leaves our understanding quite away in the darkness, because He proceeds from choosing weak things to choose "things that *are not*, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." He could sweep us away from His sanctuary, and work with Almightiness, and with perfect effect. Who are we, then, that we should say we are necessary to God? Not one of us is necessary to Him. If He have set any one of us up, and said, "Be thou my voice, my trumpet to this people," it is to our honour; it is for our blessing, and not because we

are necessary to Him. The most gifted speakers may sit in silence; the high priests of eloquence may abandon the pulpit and the altar; the greatest teachers amongst us may shut up their books, and say they will teach no more. God will strike the very stones into eloquence, and little children shall be His mighty army. To be made little, believe me, is the way to be made great. When we are nothing in our own eyes, truly our foot is set on the first step that leads to the throne.

It would appear to be a difficult lesson for the Church to learn, that God will choose His own instruments. In spite of a thousand proofs of sovereignty in this matter, the Church will stubbornly try to have a hand in the choice of ministers. Now that civilization has become a very devil to us, we say that God's agents shall not be carpenters, fishermen, tent-makers, or ploughmen. No, certainly not; they shall be sons of gentlemen, they shall have hands unhardened by labour; they shall be favourites of conventional fortune. God will not have this; He will not be indebted to His creatures. The shepherd shall be entrusted with His thunder, and the husbandman shall wield His lightnings; the little child shall subdue the dragon, and the suckling shall not be afraid of the cockatrice. Let us offer ourselves to God, if haply He will take us into His service; let us not go with boasting and confidence, as if we could give God anything, but with submission and willingness, and then shall we receive noble and effective strength.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, I will bring against Eli all the things that I have spoken concerning his house." Here we come upon the third idea of our morning's lesson, namely, that *God works through secondary agencies.* He does not go to Eli, and say to himself what he intends to do, but he sends a child to tell him. And if we knew what life really is, we should know that God is always sending messages to us by each other. If I have laid hold of life rightly; if I am aught before God but a stock or a stone; if I have seen at all into the way of His working, then every child is my minister, and every man a teacher sent from God to me. Yes, all children are preachers; all little children are God's ministers; and people from whom we never expected to hear anything may be channels of communication between our Father and our souls. Set it down as a great lesson, that you may learn something from every man, and often from the unlikeliest of men you may get a word that may solve a mystery, or yield an unexpected blessing.

God speaks to Samuel, not to Eli. There is mediation. God sends a message to Jacob's family, not through Jacob himself, but through Joseph. There is mediation. God speaks not to Israel, not to Pharaoh, directly and immediately, but through Moses. There is mediation. And this is God's plan in the world—a plan of ministry, agency, mediation.

So one man may bless another; and there is no creature, however poor and little and obscure, who cannot render service to the greatest of God's saints.

We are only true to one another as we are the instruments, so to speak, of communicating Divine revelation to one another. In proportion as any one of you can speak to me a word from God, you are my friend and helper and benefactor; and only in proportion as from this pulpit I can breathe out God's word, and not my own, shall I be to you as a prophet sent from heaven, a teacher come from the Father. One man blessing another gives us a dim hint of what is meant by God blessing all men through the Man Christ Jesus. So we get step by step out of our own little plans and reasonings up to God's great system of mediation, interposition, salvation, through the Son of His love. You cannot go immediately to God—the Infinite, Omnipotent, Everlasting Jehovah; we see not Him, but we see Jesus, His Son, and that is enough. Every prayer we send up to heaven must go right through Christ's Bethlehem, and Christ's Calvary, and Christ's Mount of Ascension—right through all Christ's work; and then it will come back again through the same road, a blessing, a song, a triumph. God blesses all men through Jesus Christ. This is what we mean by a mediatorial system: some one standing between God and man, the medium of communication from above and from below; and that this medium should be God's Son is a mystery that becomes a blessing when laid hold of by an appreciative love.

I am afraid that many hearers are kept back from the safety and joy of Christian redemption, because they do not avail themselves fully of the meaning of mediation. They think they can go straight up to God, and argue out the question of sin with Him face to face. They do not realize the difference between God and themselves; they think the finite can stand on equal terms with the Infinite, and that, after all, the question of degree has nothing to do with the question of sin. Now, if there is any lesson which God has been teaching the world more continuously and clearly than another, it is the lesson of mediation. The angel, the priest, the vision of the night, the weird prophet, the ecstatic psalmist, have all been employed by Him to give messages, to offer terms of reconciliation, or to denounce judgments. Last of all came the fulfilment and explanation of all: Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No man can go unto the Father but by Jesus Christ. No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him. So we live in a great "System of Ministry:" we act mediately; we do not see the glory, we see the grace; we do not look upon the Father's face, we see the human image of the Son of God.

Samuel ran to Eli and said, "Thou calledst me." This gives us our fourth idea, namely—*the possibility of mistaking God's voice as an ordinary call.* God can speak so humanly as to be only as a man to us. Now it is better so to hear as to give the voice of a prophet the authority of God, than to regard the authority of God but as the ordinary call of a prophet. This possibility of mistaking the Divine voice for an ordinary appeal makes our life a very critical experience. We may be hearing God without knowing it. We may in external nature be doing this. Send a clown out this morning, in all this baptism of autumnal fire, and it is nothing to him; but send a poet out, and he sees a ladder the top of which rests on the gates of heaven, and he hears in all the sunny air music and joy, psalm and hymn, and heavenly rapture; send out a man of dull, prosaic mind into the spring, and he sees nothing in it:

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose is to him;
And it is nothing more."

Let the eye of an appreciative observer light upon the primrose, and it flames with the presence of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Is it possible that any of us could have come through all this beautiful light into God's house without seeing anything in it more than common daylight?

"Cleon hears no anthems ringing
In the air and sky;
To me all Nature's ever singing,
Earnest listener, I."

Eloquence is in the hearer; pictures are in the vision. You and I may look at a picture and think nothing of it; an artist may tremble before it, and say, "I, too, am a painter." You and I may hear a discourse, and see nothing in it; another man, who has a hearing ear, listens, and is transported with delight: to him a tone is a revelation, a look is a vision from God. It is so in the daily events of our life; we mistake the Divine for the human. You may cross a street, and not know the reason why, and in that very crossing you may unconsciously be obeying a Divine suggestion. You may hold over the letter-box a letter, and suddenly you may say, "I'll not send it by this post," and your not sending it may occasion you a blessing that you never thought of. You cannot account for these things. You say, "I thought just at the last moment I would not do so;" but that is a fool's explanation of life. I rather believe that God's angels are just overhead, or just by our side, and that we do things by Divine impulse without always knowing what we are in reality doing. You say, "Yes, but don't let us

be superstitious." I answer, I am more afraid of people losing veneration than I am afraid of their becoming superstitious; and it is a poor life that does not begin in veneration, and continue in worship to the end. Here, then, is the proper attitude of a servant of God—the attitude of a listener: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." My position before God, if I am right-hearted, is that of a listener. I do not reveal, I can but receive; I do not originate, I can but reproduce; I am not a voice, I am but an echo. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Are any of you like myself in the public ministry of the Gospel? This is the way I am persuaded to get our sermons: go to God's throne, and with God's book in our hand, say with the simplicity of little children, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Are any of you teachers in the school? The same rule applies to you. Are any of you earnest Christian students of this book? The same law is yours: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Good listening is not easily obtained. We may think we are listening, while we are in reality listening to our own inner voice, and not to God's revelation. What we want is reverent, perfect listening, the utter silencing of our own voice, and waiting upon God with openheartedness and willingness to hear Him. And here is the proper spirit for one who receives Divine communications: "It is the Lord." Not defence, not defiance, no angry criticism of the revelation, but submission: "It is the Lord."

And now, having spoken of God's calls to me, let me repeat one passage of Scripture. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." So it is not Samuel, it is not Elijah, it is not Ezekiel that speaks to us, but God's own dear Son. He says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." This is God's call; Christ's call at an unlikely time it may be, through an unlikely person it may be, often mistaken as an ordinary voice it may be, but this is Christ's call. Shall we now, every one of us, the sinner, child, and alien, say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!" Blessed are they who so stand before God.

A PROPOSITION TO MINISTERS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS.

It has occurred to me that when so many of us meet every Thursday, we might turn our meeting to special advantage by holding weekly, fortnightly, or monthly councils on the work of the ministry. Why not get to know one another's methods of preaching, by a free discussion of plans of sermons? Why not encourage provocation to love and good works, by a candid comparison of one another's methods of pastoral labour? I know of no means so likely to do us good as ministers as meetings for such purposes. Churchmen have their congresses, Wesleyans their conferences, Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists their own respective *réunions;* why should not *all* meet in one common council, for the express purpose of aiding each other in reaching the highest point of pulpit power? We should thus destroy Sectarianism; we should enlarge our acquaintance with pulpit methods, and infuse new life into our ministry. I should be disposed to suggest that the work of such a council should include criticism upon the public reading of the Scriptures, remarks upon methods of conducting devotional exercises, and a free review of homiletic outlines; it being understood, of course, that each member of the council present himself for the criticism of the whole number. To such a council I should gladly invite the senior students of all colleges. I propose that such a council be established, and now hereby invite communications on the subject. When I have received sufficient replies to justify me in taking further steps, I shall not hesitate to call a meeting for the settlement of a plan. Let it be understood, once for all, that the council knows nothing of denominationalism: it is open to all; it offers a Catholic platform; it abhors all controversy that does not tend to the establishment of the heart in love. Yet there is one point to which reference must be made. It is only candid on my part, as the proposer of the council, to say that I could not meet on equal terms any man, however eminent his abilities or position, who denies the Godhead of Jesus Christ. I hate with inexpressible hatred the doctrine that would prevent any man saying to the Saviour, "My Lord and my God." I turn with disappointment and horror from teaching that is negative on this point. I honour all that is good in freedom; but to be free from truth is to be in bondage to the devil. I speak only of the doctrine, not of its teachers; against persons honest and intelligent I say not one word, but against the doctrine I burn with unquenchable fire.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, October 10th, 1869.

Let us read the 62nd chapter of Isaiah; it is the exclamation of one who is determined to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. The prophet seems to gather up all forces in himself, as if everything depended on his personal energy, and to resolve upon the immediate attainment of great blessings. Let us hear the sublime passion of a man whose soul is wrought to the highest intensity.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, may a man speak unto Thee face to face, uttering the thanksgivings of many hearts, the confessions of the sins of the people, and a cry for Thy pardoning mercy, without which we cannot live? Wilt Thou so reveal Thyself unto us as to leave no doubt of Thy presence, giving us such drawing, such enlightening of mind, such enlargement and quickening of our affections, as shall constrain us to say, This is the Lord's doing, this is the Lord's house, and this is the gate of Heaven? We have had familiar intercourse with our Father; we have felt His nearness; our hearts have leaped for joy at His drawing nigh. Why not repeat the visit of Thy grace, now that on the morning of Thy holy day, in the midst of the great city, we may feel that Thou art near our hearts with infinite blessing and love? We praise Thee for Thy marvellous works towards us as creatures of Thine hand. Thou hast preserved our life, and given us in continuance of days a new song. Thou hast spread our table in the wilderness, in the presence of our enemies, and so Thou hast given us renewed cause

to adore Thy goodness and trust Thy power. Thou hast sent a plentiful rain upon Thine inheritance, and caused us to enjoy the odours of the garden of the Lord. Thou hast given us an interest in things not seen. Thou hast called us unto Eternal Life. Thou hast put Death under our feet. Thou hast come to us in unexpected ways; not always along the high-road of Thy daily Providence, where we have expected to meet Thee—where we have prepared for Thy coming, and waited confidently for Thine appearing. Thou hast come to us in many of the incidents of life, when we did not expect Thee. Thou hast given us blessings out of the cloud. Thou hast turned the darkness into sudden light. Thou hast given us a goodly heritage in places where we expected to mourn and die. So that, altogether, Thou hast been gracious unto us with exceeding favour. Thy great daily gifts have not been withheld, and other gifts Thou hast given with them, so that our cup runneth over. Our hands are full of the blessings of the Lord, and our hearts have been made as the treasure-house of His grace. We live in God. We have no life but in Thy light. It is enough. We are immortal in our God; we are everlasting in the Everlasting Father. We beseech Thee, therefore, that we may be enabled to bring the power of an endless life to bear upon the concerns of the present time. May we deal with the affairs of Earth as those whose conversation is in Heaven! May we descend upon the concerns of time with the lofty dignity and the impatient urgency of those who would quickly return unto the higher places, in which their souls delight! Keep us from long-tarrying in the market-places of the world. Keep us from long-lingering in the high-ways and streets of commerce and pleasure and self-promotion. While we are there, may we ever be in haste. May we ever be looking forward and aspiring towards the highest service and joy of Thy children. May men take knowledge of our impatience! May men wonder concerning our hurry in the world, and be led to know that our citizenship is in Heaven, that here we have no continuing city, and that, by our impatient haste, we are declaring plainly that we seek a country! Oh, that we may so live as to think of death only as a step over a shadow into the Infinite brightness and the unending peace! We bless Thee, that we have known distaste for the things of the world. We have seen their vanity, we have sounded their hollowness. We have left the altar of the world with a sickened heart, and Thou hast drawn us into the sanctuary, and thrown before our wondering vision the things that are not seen and eternal, and filled us with a holy desire to go and be for ever with Thee. And yet Thou hast enabled us to do what we have had to do upon the earth with fidelity and earnestness and success. Such is the mystery of Thy government; for when we are most heavenly,

then do we triumph most entirely over the trifles of time; when we are most in the sanctuary of the skies, we are most masters of the things that lie round about us in this poor, gloomy, dying scene. Hence have we known that "godliness is profitable unto all things;" and when we have been seeking first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness, Thou hast added unto us all other things. We have sinned before the Lord. If any man say he hath no sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We do confess our sins. God be merciful unto us sinners. If we have escaped public accusation, yet do our own hearts convict us of a thousand transgressions. If our hand cannot be impeached by the social justice of the world, yet in our spirit have we hidden sin. We have gone astray from God in our hearts; our motives have often been mixed, and often impure. And if Thou wert strict to mark it, if Thou didst take hold of Thy sword when we gave the occasion for judgment, behold we had not lived in Thy sight to-day. But thou art merciful; Thou sent Thy Son Jesus Christ, equal with Thyself in Godhead, to be our Saviour, to offer a sacrifice for sins, and because of His work we have hope in God that our sins shall be remembered no more. Lord, help us in the delight of pardon, to triumph over the tormenting memory of our conscience, and to have peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou hast sent much sunlight to some of us. Thou hast poured Thy brightness upon us, filling our hearts and our houses with the beauty of joy. To some Thou hast sent the cloud, and the storm, and the great darkness. Thou hast taken away the delight of the eye and the support of the life, and Thou hast made some hearts poor with a deep and terrible poverty. But when Thou dost impoverish, it is that Thou mayest make rich with the more enduring wealth. When Thou dost tear, Thou dost bind up again; when Thou dost smite, Thou dost recover Thy smitten ones. We pray for those who worship to-day, sore in heart, troubled, stunned by great sorrow, blinded with the bitterest tears they ever shed. O Thou who knowest our poor life, Who rememberest that we are dust, do Thou re-establish, and comfort, and uphold all those Thy people who are now mourning before Thee. Enable them to say with simple trust, though with much sorrow, and wonder, and distress, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Thou dost give such triumphs to faith, Thou dost call Thy people to such victories as these; and oftentimes we have proved Thee, that when the darkness was deepest upon our soul, Thou didst come to us with unexpected and all-reviving blessing. Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph. And as for those who begin the world without a human father,

who to day have no father upon the earth, Thou wilt be unto them more than father and mother. Thou lovest little children ; Thou knowest the mystery of young life, and Thou wilt not forget any orphan child of Thy great family. There are no orphans in the Church ; our Father is an everlasting Father. Be with the strangers within our gates who have come to spend a morning with us. May it be to them a memorable morning—a time of stimulation and joy ! May some be comforted ; may some be encouraged ; may all be taught and edified ! And unto the triune God our Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier, be the kingdom. the power, and the glory. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON BLESSINGS IN UNEXPECTED WAYS.

"It is expedient for you that I go away."—John xvi. 7.

THE text calls us to meditate upon some of the sudden and unexpected changes in Divine movements. Sometimes heavenly blessings come to us, so to speak, by steps so clearly marked, so orderly, and so natural, that we can almost calculate how and in what measure they will descend upon us. Sometimes God gives us blessings to our reason ; we have thought about them, prepared for them, felt assured that by a kind of gracious necessity they must be ours ; and sometimes He has given us blessings in sudden and startling ways. We have been in a position, again and again, to expect our blessings. We have looked for them as for friends that were pledged to come ; and we have been able to say, almost with positive certainty *when* they would come, and *how* they would come, because God has appointed channels of communication with His creatures. There is, then, if I may say so, a division in the Divine government about which men can calculate, and reason, and foretell with almost perfect certainty ; and there is another division in the Divine government about which we know nothing—sudden breakings out upon us, startling innovations upon our life, voices that we never heard before, and manifestations for which we were entirely unprepared. So this morning I am not going to look at the commonplace and ordinary method of the Divine movement, but to turn aside, and look at some of what are

to us God's sudden, unexpected, mysterious visitations, in ways that we never thought of as being accessible, except in the way of judgment and retribution. Sometimes you can say in the morning that it will rain to-day. You say that the wind is in this quarter, or in that, and the clouds are gathering, and there are evident signs that we shall have rain to-day; and sometimes we say, Oh, that rain would come! "Oh, that out of this great Arch of Summer a baptism of rain would come!" but there is no sign of any such blessing. And sometimes quite suddenly, baffling all the speculations and calculations of the meteorologist, sometimes out of the very fire of the scorching summer, there has come down upon us an unexpected and gracious rain. So it is in the Divine movement. Sometimes I am enabled to say, We shall have a blessing to-day. Such and such preparation has been made; such and such endeavours have been maintained, and the natural result of this process is blessing, grace, peace, triumph. And then, sometimes, on the other hand, we have said, "There shall be nothing to-day." "The heart is barren, the inner voice is smitten with sudden dumbness, there will be nothing for us to-day but stony silence. It will be a day of fasting and sorrow." And, quite unexpectedly, God has sent his angel with blessings we had never thought of; and when we looked for a dreary day, a day of fasting and gloom, God has opened the windows of heaven for us, and given us blessings that it had never entered into our calculations to foretell. It is so with many of the Divine movements; and yet we often vex God, when He comes to us by unwonted ways. Though He has come to us through the pathway of a thousand storms, yet we still tremble before the gathering gloom, as if God had forgotten to be gracious. Though He has come to us with the wings of many a fire, we have still dreaded the flame, as if it tabernacled no God. Have you thought about that department of your sin? I have thought of it many a time. We will not let God have any extraordinary methods of manifestation to us. We will have yesterday repeated to-day, and to-day is to be the image and prophecy of the morrow. And yet God will not have it so. He will come to us, not always by the great grand staircase of His daily Providence, when we can see Him as it were descending in all the pomp of His Infiniteness, but He will come to us along passages, and down by-lanes, and will start up before us suddenly and unexpectedly; and it is then we become so weak as oftentimes to grieve Him, as if He had not ten thousand ways into His universe beside the one way that we speak ofas His peculiar path.

Now, here is one of the instances of unexpected blessing, of unexpected movements, of movements that escape all calculation, and set aside all that the heart would have predicted. I propose, therefore, to look at

this text in the first instance *as reversing our own notions of the Divine movement.* "It is expedient for you that I go away." We cannot see that. It does not look so to us. Let us, therefore, be fair and candid with the spirit of the text. It looks to me exactly the contrary of that; and I should therefore say it is inexpedient for us that Christ go away. It is the blackest and direst calamity that can befall us that Christ go away; and yet He says expressly, in words that a little child may understand, It is expedient for you that I go away. Here, then, is an upset of our ordinary notions. We should have said this, viz., "Jesus Christ must remain upon the earth until the very last soul is saved. He must be the last to go away. He must stand by the grave until He sees every saint pass through it—until the last little child is winged as a cherub—and then, when He has seen all this done, let Him go." That is how *we* should have talked; and not, I think, without common sense, viewing the subject in a purely earthly light. Walking in the light of our own understanding—in the light of daily fears, in the light of what is called prudence and discretion—we should have said, Blessed Saviour, Thou must remain until the very last gleam of day, and when Thou hast seen the very last of Thy recovered lambs enfolded in the high mountains of Israel, then Thou must also come and complete the great assembly in heaven. Instead of that, He says, I must go first; I must go now, and it is expedient for you that I go away. And so God is constantly, in all the processes of our daily life, upsetting our notions; this we do not like, and it takes a great deal of hard and terrible drill to bring a man to this point, viz., "God is King, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight." It would appear that God will not have our calculations. It would appear as if He took special delight in proving our calculations to be mistakes. So we can never get on two days at a time. We say, To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundant, and the third day we shall go into this and yonder city; and God says, No, I will break your days in two, and where you expect prosperity you shall find a grave. So God won't have our long-headed calculations, and He will not have our deluded predictions as to this event and that. It would seem, I repeat, as if He took special delight in reversing all our ordinary methods, and training us to wisdom by first convicting us of folly. It is so, for example, in our social life. We should have said this: "God will never take away the head of a house until all the children have been trained, educated, and established in life. God will certainly see that the father of the family remain until his last little child leaves his roof a man, a woman." And yet God says, "No, the head of the family must go first;" and He says this also, "It is expedient for you that your father go;" and the heart cannot say, "It

is well." No, that cannot be. But God is always doing that; always turning our ideas upside down, and appointing us blessings where we expected despair. We should have said that God will allow every man to bring his work to something like completion; He will never go and break the little bud off the stem; He will never allow a man to work up his column, and not to put the capital on; He will never allow an author to begin a volume without allowing him also to finish it, to revise it, to attach his signature to it by way of endorsement, and to hand it to society as a complete thing. And yet He is doing exactly the opposite of this. You say, Here is a beautiful little bud, and it shall be nourished with light and with dew, and become the best flower in the garden; and God comes in at night, and nips it off, and in the morning we have tears and sorrow. We begin to build our pillar, and it is growing under our touch, and we say, This shall be a beautiful column, a noble pillar; it shall be capped in the most elaborate style of sculpture; and God takes us away just as we are putting on the head, and our purposes are broken off. And as for the author, poor man! just as he dips his pen to finish a sentence, God says, That will do; and He punctuates the paragraph with *Death*. That is a fact; but this is what we are perplexed by, viz., when God takes away the little blushing bud, and breaks the column in twain, and arrests the hand of genius in its wondrous fabrications, and then says, It is expedient *for you* that it be so. And it is at this point that we either become strong men by the triumph of faith, or we succumb as the captives of unbelief.

Let us look at the text, then, in another light, viz., *as showing the superiority of the spiritual over the material*. It was a great thing to have the visible Christ; it is a greater to have the spiritual Christ. This is a most difficult point in human education, viz., to proceed from the letter to the spirit—from the material to the immaterial. And this is the difference in scholarship—one man is learned in the letter, another is learned in the Spirit; the one is a reader, the other is a genius. In proportion as we get spiritual power are we rich for ever. You lose your friend, but you never lose his friendship. Death breaks up the assembly, but he never impairs the fellowship. Death hushes the communications of the lips; He cannot silence the more eloquent interchanges of the heart. Those whom we truly love are always with us—not always *audible*, but always *present*. You have not lost that child of yours you buried ten years ago. The little creature is still with you. And oh, what talks you have together now! When you go out alone, the little one seems to know where you are and to come to you; and your face does so brighten, and your breast does so heave with unwonted and blessed emotion, as you talk over the days that are gone. And even

that prodigal child of yours is with you to-day. You cannot see him—you may not, perhaps, know his address—you may be unable to write to him, yet the lad is close to your heart. You see him when you retire to rest; you look at him in the morning as he is standing by your bedside; and he is with you all the day, notwithstanding his sin, and perhaps (so wonderful are the mysteries of the heart), the nearer because of his sin. There seems to go out after him a realizing love, deep and agonizing; and if he would but come back again, there would be more joy in your heart over that recovered one, than over all the family that never gave you a moment's pain. But I want to fix the mind, you observe, simply upon this point, viz., the realizing power of love. My friend has gone away from me over the sea and beyond the mountain, but I have him in my heart; his thoughts, his views of life, his behaviour under given circumstances, his noble impatience, magnanimous scorn of all that is low and mean, never leave me; they will mould my life, they will save me in many a temptation. He is with me always because of the realizing power of love. And this that we know something about in friendship, in the family circle, in literature, reaches its highest consummation in Jesus Christ; for though He has gone away from us, He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Though we cannot see Him, yet He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Though we would gladly lay hold of His wounded hand, He says it is better not. It is expedient for you that fleshly contact cease, and that you lay hold of Him by the tendrils of your love. For what if we did grasp hands, Death would break up our union; but if we grasp hearts, we are one for ever.

Now, do not expect young Christian people at once to get up into that high line of Christian experience. I am not unwilling that you should continue the child's song—

> "I think when I read that sweet story of old,
> When Jesus was here among men,
> How He called little children like lambs to His fold,
> I should like to have been with Him then."

It is a poor prayer that you will come to dislike more and more the longer you live, though it is a beautiful song for children. You will come to know what it is to say you are glad that Christ is known to you no more after the flesh, but now is known to you through the hunger of eager love, through the thirst of your heart, through the desires of an unquenchable life.

Then let us look at this text in the third place, as *conveying blessing to us through the medium of a trial.* It must have been a trial for

these simple, unlettered men to lose the presence of the visible, personal Jesus Christ. It could not have been an easy thing from such men. Try to realize their circumstances, if you would get really into the spirit of the text. It could not have been an easy thing for them to acquiesce in this bereavement, and yet Jesus Christ distinctly points out that He was going away for *their* sakes, and not for His own. He did not say, "My brethren, I am weary; this world is too heavy a load for me; I have seen you for a little while, and my heart is sickened and sore and weary, and I must go away again." He did not speak about Himself at all. He said, "It is expedient for *you* that I go away." And do not let us think this strange, because we ourselves have had experience that may help to illuminate the mystery of this separation. For example, here is a mother who is teaching her little child to walk. You know what a pleasure it is to see a little creature taking its first walk from one chair to another? I do not think I shall ever forget the first time I taught a little child to walk, and the joy I had in seeing the little toddling creature manage to go three steps without my help. There came to me a sense of triumph, a sense of something done. Well, here is a mother teaching her child to walk from one chair to another, and she begins by holding the child's waist gently with both hands, and as the little thing steadies itself, and seems to have found its feet, she just takes away her hands little by little. Why does she take away her hands? Does she say, "I am tired; I do not like this posture of embracing thee, or of holding thee"? No, but she says in effect, "It is expedient for thee, my little child, that I take away this motherly support; thou must learn to walk by thyself;" and so the hands go away, not because the mother is weary, but because the child must be taught, sooner or later, self-reliance.

Here is a father sending his boy to school, and there is such a dreary night before he must go. The father and the mother half think they may never see him again. He has never been out of their sight for twenty-four hours, and now they are going to send him away to a distant school, and the mother hardly sleeps all night, and the father gets up at an unusually early hour, and altogether there is a general sense of a sort of domestic earthquake in the house, because the youth is going to be sent to school. Now, why all this discomfort? Why do not they keep him at home? Why do not they keep him constantly in their sight? They say it is expedient for him that our presence be withdrawn; it is expedient that he escape the temptations of home; it is expedient for him that he undergo drill and discipline; it is expedient for him that he meet his equals in the great scholarly contest; *it is expedient for him*, and on that principle the father strengthens himself, and the mother makes herself a strong

woman, and they bid him good-bye, not with delight, and yet with a secret comforting conviction that it is for the youth's good that he undergo this separation. So then we know something of this—we know something of trial in this direction; and this kind of trial reaches the perfection of its meaning in Jesus Christ's separation from His Church. He says, It is expedient for you that I go away; I shall always be with you nevertheless; yet by my bodily absence you will be trained to thought, you will be trained to spiritual realization, the highest faculties of your nature will be called into exercise; and in order that this may be so, I shall no sooner go away than I shall send down upon you the Holy Ghost, for the Holy Ghost is better than the dying body, the Holy Spirit of God better than these pierced feet and these wounded hands.

My brethren, we shall have a poor notion of life if we regard it as being a blessing only in proportion as it is a succession of sunny scenes. That is not life, it is but one aspect of it. No great life is all made up of sunshine; we get strong by discipline, we grow by strife. The great storm rocks us into rugged power, and by this power of endurance we come into the grace of gentleness. Great sorrows make tender hearts. We are softened and refreshed by the dew of tears. When we are weak, then are we strong. You never can be great and reliable, full-grown men, till your hearts have been crushed within you, and God has taught you in the gloomy school of a thousand disappointments.

This leads me to say, no true manhood can be trained by a merely intellectual process. You cannot train men by the intellect alone; you must train them by the heart; and this shows the fundamental mistake which is being made by some modern teachers. You can never train a Church out of the head; you may have a Church so-called, and you may open halls and bring to them the most scientific men in Europe, and you may lecture on all scientific topics, yet you can never make a Church out of the head. You must take hold of manhood by the heart, if you would train it into strength and dignity and usefulness. A Church, then, can only come out of the heart. So, if you have been training yourselves only by the intellect, I do not wonder at your being a poor and shrivelled Church. I never find a Church that takes hold of the head alone going forward, I find it progressing backwards; and I thank God that I see it shrivelling out of existence. But in a Church whose fundamental principle is this, With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, I find humanity, tenderness, nobleness, benevolence, and divinity; and this is the secret of Christ's power over man. He does not come to discuss with them some empty conundrum, some wretched enigma, that challenges only the intellect; He sets Himself down in the

heart, and trains that, brings that, into the liberty of His blessed captivity, and out of the heart there comes His kingdom, which never can be moved So I have no fear about these people that are setting up Churches of Progress, and Churches of Science, and Churches of Literature; I have no fear of them emptying Christian sanctuaries, because a man is not all head. If he is, he is not all man. You must lay hold of his heart, and by his affections and by all his moral sympathies you must train him, and then he will be ready to receive all the light, all the knowledge you can possibly convey to him; but if you train only his intellect, you do but plant flowers upon a ghastly tomb.

And I would say, finally, in one word, that the text may be regarded as giving the proper explanation of Jesus Christ's body absence—I *go* away. The words must be regarded as revealing part of a plan—I go away; I am not sent, I am not surprised away; I am moving according to a scheme, a plan. There are no unexpected thoughts in the mind of God. The changes that are strange and startling to us are links in the chain of God's own fashioning. Lay hold of this, and you escape the atheism of chance, and come into the peaceful religion of familiar trust. Therefore, in proportion as I think of God's government *as a plan* am I at rest. In proportion as I take it to pieces and discuss it in detail am I vexed, and troubled, and disappointed. When I think of God building a great temple, I say, Give Him time till He brings the topstone on, and says it is finished. And be careful, too, lest you mistake the scaffolding for the temple. God often requires, as it were, laborious scaffolding; and when I come to look at His unfinished temple and see nothing but these great beams, and posts, and planks, I say, "There is no temple here, there is nothing but confusion;" but God says to me "*Wait, wait.*" And I come back and back; and when I return on the last day to look at it, all the scaffolding is gone. Then shall I find the floor laid with fine gold, and the roof lighted with such beauty as was never painted by the brush of the artist.

Some of you need this lesson. I speak in the presence of some who have come to-day as mourners, and they need to be gently reminded that God is working out a plan—one thing belongs to another—that there is nothing fragmentary and detached and isolated in God's movement. Where we see confusion, He sees a plan, and He is working it out. You need that gentle hint. May it fall like morning-light on your troubled hearts!

Our youngest deacon, Mr. Thomas Russell, a man much respected by all who knew him, has been suddenly taken away. A few nights ago I spoke to him in one of the pews of this chapel. He was proposing an arrangement for my comfort in connection with the Thursday service.

I saw nothing noticeable about him to lead me to infer that he was not in good health. I parted with him then, as friend with friend, and now he has been taken away as by a stroke—withdrawn as in an instant. And such events as these ought not to pass without reminding us, that at such an hour as we think not, the greatest events in life occur. You and I meet to-day; we may never meet again. You are now in your usual state of health; to-morrow you may be gone. I am now speaking as a strong man, rejoicing to run a race; before next Sunday I may be with the general assembly of the first-born. What then? Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might.

Though the Saviour has gone away, He has made a path into the Heavenly Kingdom for us. He will not suffer us to rest short of His own Throne. "Where I am, there shall ye be also." Could we but see things as they are, we should see the whole Church all over the world move in one grand procession towards the gate of the Upper City, a band of freemen, an army of conquerors, having banners dipped in light, and singing of the Cross that gives them the right of way to their Father's house. We cannot see things as they are. This is the day of cloud and gloom; the full brightness is not yet.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, October 14th, 1869.

The Sermon.

ON THE POWER AND WEAKNESS OF MONEY.

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
"Money answereth all things."
"Ye shall be redeemed without money."
"Money answereth all things."
"Thy money perish with thee."
"Money answereth all things."
"He that hath no money come."
"Money answereth all things."
"I counsel thee to buy of me fine gold."

It is possible that the very greatness of the word "soul" may have prevented our apprehension of the gravity of the first inquiry. The vastness and grandeur of the word require to be approached gradnally, lest we be overwhelmed, and so miss the very point of the question. Some men may pronounce the word "soul," without attaching much meaning to it, and others may imagine that they are attaching so much meaning to it that there is no fear whatever of their bartering away so precious a possession for anything that the world can give in exchange. This latter conception may be a device of the devil; it is quite in his way to allow men so to magnify themselves and their destiny, as to give him an opportunity of undermining their foundations, whilst their heads are lifted up in the delirious exercise of admiring and worshipping themselves. It may be instructive, therefore, to take the question somewhat in detail, and to discuss it from a point which is obvious to the most common understanding. Suppose, then, that we put the matter thus: What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his

sight? Any of us can answer that question instantly. Is there any man in all this congregation who is willing to increase his income a thousandfold on the condition of being made blind for the remainder of his life? He would have the acres, but not the landscape; he would part with morning, and summer, and beauty; the heavens would be a blank to him, and the earth a gloomy pit. Is any man here prepared to conclude such a bargain? If so, tell me what would he be profited? Or say, What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his *hearing?* Will any of you put down in figures the extent of his advantage? Don't shirk the question; it is practical, it ought not to be difficult. Look at the spectacle: a man has gained all the world, but has lost the voices of his children; no longer can he be charmed by music; no more for ever will he know the power of eloquence; the spring and the summer will pass without his hearing one of their ten thousand messages. Say, then, what is the value of his gain? You who are quick at numbers, let me demand of you an answer! Do assign some value to the advantage of this cunning merchant! Look at him, sitting in stony silence; observe his eyes wandering about, expressive of eager curiosity and mocking bewilderment; stand before him; realize his true position,—all men, all birds, all brooks, all forests, all oceans, dumb to him for ever,—and tell me instantly what the far-sighted merchant has gained? Or, change the ground, and let us put the inquiry thus: What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his *health?* He shall have all that is known under the names of property, convenience, luxury, so far as is possible, but health shall be the price which he shall pay for his vast proprietorship. He shall lie upon his couch; his blood shall weakly pursue its circulation; the grasshopper shall be a burden to him; the summer air shall bring no revival of his decaying powers; the physician shall be of no service to him; he shall be the prisoner of pain; he shall have no relish for his daily food, yet all the world is lying at his feet; and surely some of you arithmeticians and reasoners can tell me how much the crafty speculator has gained? You see how urgent I am in putting these questions. I feel the supreme importance of having a clear understanding about such matters. You say that the Christian teacher is always talking about things that lie a long way from the inquiries and pursuits of ordinary men; but now, seeing that I have come down into your very midst, and put to you questions simple enough for little children, you cannot blame me if I demand an explicit answer to inquiries which can hardly admit of controversy. I know your reply. I give you credit for sense enough to answer, that the man who would give his *sight* is a fool, that he who would sell his *hearing* for the world would make a madman's bargain, and that to give up *health*

for anything that the world can give in return is to commit the crime of suicide, though with the palliation of insanity. What I want to be felt is this: that it is possible to resent the suggestion of such exchanges, and yet to be doing that which is infinitely worse. Think of it. Possible to be saving our sight, and yet to be bartering away our manhood; possible to retain the faculty of hearing, and yet to be deafening ourselves against the voice that appeals to the soul; possible to be preserving our health, and yet to be damning our eternity! Have you thought sufficiently of this? May you not be working in an inverted order, careful about that which is visible and appreciable in the market-place, anxious to preserve that which is merely decorative, and whose value can be assigned in common numbers, and yet allowing opportunities of salvation, development, and eternal blessedness to pass by without improvement? See to it, ye shrewd, far-sighted, speculating men, that when you open your hand to look at your great bargain ye be not grasping a cold and worthless clod!

Let me do you the justice to say that there are moments in life when you do assign true values to earthly possessions; there are moments of inspiration in which men see the hollowness of worldly ownership. Look, for example, at this scene: Here is a ship caught in a terrible storm, and it is evident that loss must be suffered—the question is where shall the loss *begin?* There are vast quantities of iron, silver, gold, precious stones, and jewels in the vessel—what shall go *first?* In these moments of terrible excitement we shall probably escape some of the sophistries of ordinary reasoning, and get at the inner heart of men. Come, then, say what shall go *first?* Do the men hesitate for one moment? No! Let the iron go, then the silver, then the gold, then the precious stones—let them all go, only save the bread, save the water! What, shall the gold go and the *crust* be saved? Shall we throw out diamonds, and pearls, and works of cunning art, and save a *glass* of *cold water?* Men! bethink yourselves what fools are you to throw away fine metals and precious stones and save a loaf, for which the beggar on the streets of any city would hardly thank you! Is this wise? Is this prudent? You cannot—you will not hesitate for an instant, everything must go but the necessaries of life; nothing has any value compared with the importance of being saved from the stormy deep; only, say they, save us from this grave that is yawning around us, and we shall be your debtors for ever! They are content to have nothing but their mere lives; no property, no ornaments, no home, no place wherein to rest their heads—only let them have life, and they will be satisfied and thankful. Pity, is it not, that it should require a storm to teach some men the first principles of common sense! There is no storm now; we are seated in

the peaceful sanctuary; why not resolve to put the world under the dominion of our soul, and to show forth heavenly wisdom in the affairs of our daily life? Let me remind you that there is a time predicted when men who have been disobedient to the voice of God shall desire their very identity to be destroyed, crying with unheard or disregarded voice that the rocks may fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. We have just seen men on the sea willing to give all they have that their bare existence may be saved; in the latter case, we hear of men who desire to die, and death flees from them in mockery of their importunate prayer.

After hearing the passages of Scripture which have just been recited, some of you may probably wish to know the doctrine of Christianity as to worldly possessions. I do not hesitate to reply, that it is perfectly possible to have much of the present world, and yet to preserve the soul in its integrity towards God. There is a false theology of money. It would appear as if some persons thought that the very act of getting money was itself wrong. The Scriptures nowhere sanction such a notion. "Godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Insist upon the old commonplace doctrine, that it is not the use, but the abuse of the world which is fatal to many hearts. As a mere matter of fact, known to us by distressing observation, the saving of money is as a fascination of the devil to many men; it absorbs their energies; it engrosses their time; it perverts their moral nature; it destroys natural affection; it sets them on fire of hell. Kept from the sight of gold, they may even bear a strong resemblance to pious men; they may be intelligent, genial, and entertaining, yet the moment their thoughts are turned to the accumulation of property, every trace of nobleness is destroyed. The victim of the world is entirely without self-control: every speck of dust is to him as a shackle of bondage; he would risk his eternity for a stone or a clod. At all times he would not know this, for in the moments of his release from the urgency of his tormentor he might discover traits of a better disposition; it is when he is brought again into contact with worldly concerns that he shows how utterly he is enslaved and unmanned. I may remind my young hearers of the tiger that was trained to be the playmate of a favourite child. Weeks and months and years elapsed, and the tiger was gentle and playful; it so happened, however, that in licking the child's hand it tasted blood, and instantly the natural appetite of the creature was excited, and the child fell a victim to its ferocity. It is so in the moral history of many a man: there are breaks in human life which are filled up with many excellencies, and which apparently give the lie to the charge of apostasy, and yet suddenly some besetting sin

will set the whole nature on fire, and in the madness of an hour the fabric of a lifetime may be overthrown.

To pay the soul away for anything that the world can give, is the last degree of infatuation. Yet I feel that in talking of paying the soul away, I may be talking an unknown language, for some men hardly know themselves to be in possession of souls; they live outwards; they have no inward life; they live themselves into fields and bricks, bank-notes, chimney-shafts, and steam-engines. If you want to know anything about their souls, you must count their bales of cotton, their sacks of wheat, their bars of iron; you must not look in their eyes for the vision that pierces eternity, into their faces for lines of thought chiselled by sorrow, born of high desire, and lifelong struggle in pursuit of good; you must look into their barns, you must measure their iron safes, you must number their parchments, and set a value on their cattle, and—and—and—*nothing more!* Of course the young man says that he intends to go just so far, and to turn round when he thinks his soul in danger. He says he will not allow himself to be the prey of avarice; he will keep the world at arm's length; nay, more, he will stand upon the world in sign of his dominion. Let him beware lest his over-confidence be the occasion of his stumbling. Can a man turn round on the devil's pathway just when he pleases? Is it not the devil's policy to lure the young soul to lengths which admit of no return? Does the devil allow a man to feel his presence until he has laid such a grip upon him as cannot be thrown off? You say you will leave the place of supposed danger the moment you begin to feel evil effects, but it is too late then; to feel the power of the world is to know that you have become a helpless bondsman. The young man is only safe as he makes the cultivation of his spiritual nature the one absorbing business of his life. Everything that is merely secular should occupy a very low place in his thoughts. With the kingdom of heaven before him as the goal towards which he is constantly moving, he should hold his head erect, so as not even to see the gilded allurements by which the world seeks to accomplish his destruction. Our safety is in having lofty ideals, and in constant labour to secure their realization. Let the getting of money be a man's ideal, and he will of necessity grow towards the dust; let a man hunger and thirst after the kingdom of God, and he will grow into strength and enjoy an unspeakable peace.

This leads me to say, that it is quite possible to be poor in this world's goods and yet to have unsearchable riches. The highest profits in life cannot be set down in figures. The science of numbers is the science of mistakes when applied to the soul. The testing questions which a man should put to himself are these: Am I right with God? Have I been

crucified with Christ? Do I treat this world with the urgent impatience of a pilgrim who seeks a heavenly country? Am I growing in intellectual power? Does my love go out in lofty desire towards God? Am I pure, gentle, true, courageous in all good? Do bad men hate me, do oppressors fear me, do honest men brighten at my coming, and bless me in the name of the Lord? Whoso can answer these questions in the affirmative has unsearchable riches, though he may not have a place whereon to lay his head. The outward man will perish, but the inward man is assuredly renewed day by day. In going down, he is in reality going up—his march towards the grave is an ascent towards the skies. Be rich in this way, and poverty itself shall be an element in your wealth; perish after this fashion, and you will be able to say and sing with Angelo—

"The more the marble wastes,
The more the statue grows."

It will probably be asked by some young hearers, What is the meaning of the expression, "Money answereth all things"? To this I can reply best by throwing out a challenge: write out a list of everything that can be bought for money, and I will write out a list of things that are to be had without money and without price. You can write at the head of your list, "Money answereth all things;" and I will write at the head of mine, "Thy money perish with thee." Write your list; or wait, I will write it for you; it is but a short and easily-remembered tale. On your list I read as follows—houses, fields, bricks, timber, iron, food, raiment, wine, horses, paint, gilt, stucco—I may now add &c., for there is nothing remains but that is of a piece with what has been recited. Now let me refer to the other list, which bears the heading "Thy money perish with thee:"—Courage, Honour, Truth, Purity, Gentleness, Charity, Peace, Magnanimity, Power of Intellect, Kindness of Heart, Beauty of Behaviour. With money you can buy the canvas and the oil, but not the artistic eye which interprets and appreciates the picture; you can buy the poem, but the living and inspiring poetry is not for sale; you can rent the garden, but cannot bribe the flowers to whisper their tender messages. After all, it is but a very little way that money can go; it can do nearly everything in the market-place or among the dust of cities, but what do the angels know of your currency, your bills of exchange, your promissory notes, and your intricate conveyancing of estates? Not one of the great redemptions of life can be wrought out with money: death takes no bribe; the grave will not sell its victories for gold; you may buy the Bible, but you cannot buy the Holy Ghost; you may pay for the masonry, but no money can put you in possession of the Spirit of the altar. Such, then, is the power, and such the weakness of money;

such is the little world in which Mammon holds sway, and such the boundless universe in which the blessings and curses of the money-god are utterly impotent. Behold, I set before you a choice of courses, and I would, in the Divine name, urge you to make an instant election! If men would boldly say to themselves that they have fully determined to sell their souls to the devil, some social advantage would be the result; other men would then be put upon their guard, little children might be kept out of their way, and society would be able to distribute its confidences with discrimination. It is when men deceive themselves that the power of mischief is augmented; the devil's army is dressed in false clothing, and many who look only on outward signs are lured into danger, and drawn down to death. If you have sold yourselves to the god of this world, do say so; make the fatal transaction publicly known; avoid the very semblance of being religious; do not turn the sanctuary into a mere annex of the warehouse; openly declare that you have elected to be damned for gold. We shall then know what to make of you. We shall distinguish your evil presence from afar, and shall flee from your approach as from a noisome pestilence.

From this word of warning I gladly turn to a word of earnest welcome to the Cross of our blessed and only Saviour. "Ye shall be redeemed without money." "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish." Here is a region where money is not known—he that hath no money come! The rich and the poor alike bring nothing to the Cross. We have to bring our sinful hearts, our wasted lives, and to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. No bribe must be in the hand, no reference must be made to possibilities of future merit; nothing is wanted but a full surrender to the humbling and saving power of the Cross. The rich man must throw off the glittering encasement of his riches, and come with empty heart and hand to the Saviour. The poor man must make no merit of his poverty, but come simply as a sinner, in whom there is no power of self-redemption, and ask Jesus Christ to receive him as a ruined and helpless offender. See the exceeding grace of God in this! All men stand upon one level—circumstances are cleared off, that human nature may be seen in its true spiritual condition, and all the arbitrary distinctions of the world are lost in the one appellation of sinners. I know it must be hard for some of you rich men to believe that you cannot do anything towards your own salvation. You revel in riches; your wealth has placed you within a circle where your word is law. Men consult your tastes, and bow to your wishes; but, as sinners before God, you are as helpless as the beggar that groans at your gate; and this, of

course, is very humbling to you, it is difficult to understand, and it is hard to believe; yet, I tell you, in this house of prayer, that this is the unchangeable truth of God!

Can I release you without saying that your property involves stewardship? What have you that you have not received? Remember that the Lord your God giveth you power to get wealth, and that though the image and superscription are Cæsar's, the gold itself is God's. Make your wealth a blessing to others; gladden the poor by your noble bounty; extend the education, the enlightenment, and the freedom of the world; sweeten your daily bread by dealing out a portion to the hungry; let the blind man know that your eyes are at his service; let the oppressed man know that your arm is his—do these things, and ye shall have enduring riches. Do thus, and your inheritance shall never waste.

Men and brethren, rich and poor, stand up and sing—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

The Prayer.

Almighty God, grant us release from the pressure of the world by giving us true ideas of the worth of life and the wonderfulness of our destiny, as men bearing the image and likeness of God. We own that we have digged for foundations in the dust, and that we have pursued the gains of this world as if they could enrich us for ever; we have bowed down to the god of this world; we have sought to heal our sorrows and strengthen our souls by such rewards as he could give us. Hear us, now that we acknowledge our blindness and our sin, and cry humbly unto Thee for mercy. Truly, Thou hast shown us that riches are vanity, and that worldly pleasures are a snare to the soul. We were filled with sorrow when Thou didst show us that the world was a lie, and that its rewards were useless; yet, since Thou hast shown us the true riches, Thou hast blessed our hearts with an imperishable hope, and delivered us from all feeling of want. Thou hast caused us to know that the gain of understanding is better than the merchandise of silver, and that all the things that we can name are not to be compared unto wisdom. Thou didst find it difficult thus to teach our hearts; we were selfish and stubborn, and our eyes were fastened with lingering desire upon the fascinations of the present world; we imagined that man could live by bread alone, and that in fine gold he could find constant defence; yet, blessed be Thy name, Thou hast delivered us from the power of this temptation, and given us understanding of the true riches. We give Thee thanks on behalf of every man who can say from the heart—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" Thou hast delivered such from the fear of poverty, and established their hearts in immoveable confidence. In the blessed moment in which Thou didst give us assurance of Thy Fatherhood, Thou didst endow us with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. So, as long as we are Thy children, Thou dost permit us to command Thy resources; all things are ours, and even poverty itself comes to us in friendly guise when we live on the bread that cometh down from heaven. We think with overflowing joy of Him

who was rich, and who for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich, and in His necessities we forget our own trifling wants. Look Thou graciously upon Thy servants now before Thee, who are about to return to the toils and cares of daily life; help them to touch pitch without being defiled; in stooping to do the work of the world that now is, may their hearts be lifted up in the strength and usefulness of Divine sonship; bless them in basket and in store; lead them to living fountains of water; and even now do Thou give them the most comforting anticipations of heavenly rest. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, dwell with us and save us from the power of darkness. Amen.

City Temple Notes.

STANDING in the very midst of the city of London as a Christian preacher, it has occurred to me, that some further use of a great opportunity of looking at men and things may be made, than has hitherto been attempted in the *City Temple*. We have in this weekly Record a Temple *altar* and a Temple *pulpit*, why not have a Temple *balance*, by which to test the value of many pretensions? To handle such a balance correctly, as in the sight and fear of God, will require a combination of righteousness and charity which it is almost impossible to realize. It would be easy to speak the stern word of the law, yet the law itself fails when it ceases to speak under the inspiration of mercy; it would be easy to speak the flattering word of conventional courtesy, yet politeness is sin, if it have not a background of incorruptible righteousness. To combine these, to be true yet gentle, to be angry without sin, to satirise without sneering, to commend without hypocrisy, is not easy; yet, may not Divine grace overcome human infirmity? I shall endeavour to speak fearlessly, sometimes to answer a fool according to his folly, and sometimes to show what a fool he is, by not answering him at all,—specially, shall I be anxious to get a hearing for misunderstood men, to give interpretation and emphasis to all who have a right word to say but are slow of speech, and to call into effect powers that are now chilled and discouraged by unfriendly circumstances. This proposed addition to the *City Temple* shall be developed as events may suggest. No pledge of uniformity is given,—the balance itself shall be always ready.

An alarming state of affairs is reported by the Paris correspondent of a London newspaper. Dating his letter on Thursday evening, the 14th inst., he writes thus:—"Naturally, the air is clouded with parsons—I really believe them to be the tourists of the age; prim pilgrims of pleasure, they people Europe, improve the occasion by preaching in small cities to relieve the Rev. Roulette Rowdy, M.A., and go home with opened minds to their mild but pleasant tea-parties, for which they are usually very nice young men. I encountered nine yesterday, exclusive of the Rev. White Choker, who lives here, between the Arch of Triumph and the Grand Caravanserai." Here, alas! is a vivid illustration of the mutability of human circumstances. Look at the frightfully rapid variations of the life of those "prim pilgrims of pleasure,"—they "cloud the air," they "people Europe," they "preach in small cities," they are boldly encountered in batches of nine by a newspaper correspondent, and they finally settle down to "their mild but pleasant tea-parties." That the air was "clouded" when "our own correspondent" indulged in this sneer cannot be justly doubted, and that the style of composition which he has adopted is admirably suited to a "*mild*" tea-party will at once be admitted; we concede these points most unreservedly, yet candour obliges us to add that no "*pleasant*" tea-party could survive such an infliction of feeble genius. Nor is the feebleness of genius altogether without explanation: when a solitary man has "encountered" nine "prim pilgrims of pleasure," it ought not to be matter of surprise that his own pleasure should have been considerably impaired, especially if these "prim pilgrims" who "cloud the air" had so far forgotten themselves as to descend to the atmospheric stratum in which the head of "our own

correspondent" may be supposed to move. It was heroic on the part of "our own correspondent" openly to sneer at "prim pilgrims" who, according to his own showing, are numerous enough to "cloud the air" and "people Europe;" it was courteous of him to write of strangers as he has done; it was the height of magnanimity to try to bring into contempt a body of men so obviously wanting in good taste as to give him an opportunity of "encountering" them. We should not have noticed the anonymous and clumsy assault of "our own correspondent," even to repel the notion that "parsons" are so contemptible a class as he would make them out to be, but we do wish to point out that there is nothing in the Christian religion opposed to the highest strength of manhood, spiritual and intellectual; if its teachers deserve such remarks as we have quoted, they have themselves to blame. The doctrines which Jesus Christ has authorized them to teach are more than worthy of the most transcendent genius and the most heroic courage. Some men try to stab the Master through the servant. "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

There are several ways in which young men may help me in the various departments of my ministry, the principal of which is by writing at my dictation. If three or four young men who can write shorthand will give me one evening in the week, they will enable me to keep fully abreast with all the claims that are made upon me. The work when so divided will not be heavy for them, yet their service will relieve me from a very serious burden. All who are willing to help in this way are invited to offer their aid at once.

As an arrangement for self-protection, I am driven to announce the following as my charges for general public service; in all cases travelling expenses must, of course, be paid:—

Preaching on behalf of the salaries of poor ministers	*Nothing.*
Preaching for ministers whose salaries are less than £100 a year	*Nothing.*
Preaching at the opening of chapels	*Six Volumes of Standard Literature.*
Attending Tea-meetings	*Fifty pounds.*
Going to Bazaars	*A hundred guineas.*
Serving on Committees	*Two thousand pounds.*

Several uninformed friends have written to me, asking for lectures. Once for all, let it be understood by all readers of the *City Temple*, that I do not deliver lectures; I do not believe in lectures, as that term is generally understood; this one thing I do—I preach the Gospel of the Son of God. That is more than enough for all my strength. Gladly would I preach every day, and all day long, so inspiring is the theme! We are receiving abundant evidence that the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation, and so long as we enjoy such triumphs, we shall not descend to compete for lower victories.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, October 21st, 1869.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou knowest us by name, and canst come to us according to our special wants. Thou hast treated us as if we alone were Thy children, as if Thou hadst not a whole universe beyond us to care for and bless; as the sun doth bathe the earth in light, as if it were the only world over which Thou didst set it, so Thou hast filled us with hope and glory, as if we were Thine only begotten sons. We come to Thee with overflowing hearts; our mouth is opened in renewed praise; we have made haste to appear in this Thy house; Thou hast given us so much; Thou hast held back nothing from us; Thou hast made us rich with Thine own self. We have left the pursuits of the world for an hour, and we thank Thee that we have hope of rest in Thee whilst we abide here. Wilt Thou not hasten to help us? Wilt Thou not give us a reviving? Why should we thus question Thee when Thou hast already answered us—Lo, God is here, and this is a holy place. Let us now see the littleness of earth, and let us feel the infinite preciousness of heaven. Help us to be truthful, noble, courageous, and every way like Jesus Christ; may we do our worldly business in an unworldly spirit; may we perform all our pilgrimage in haste. This morning give us the bread which, being eaten in secret, shall be pleasant; and the waters which, being stolen from the time of the world, shall be sweet. In this hour we shall live long—these are the moments which deepen our vitality. Though we are in the midst of the week, yet do we anticipate the Sabbath; we hear its voices of music, we feel its hallowing and quieting spell. Lord, make our whole life as a Sabbath. Give us rest even in the midst of labour, and Divine elevation even amidst the distrac-

tions of an uncertain and unsatisfactory world. God be merciful to us sinners. We cannot cease this prayer whilst we are conscious of the presence of our sins in our life; yet do we utter it in assured confidence that it is Thy delight to forgive. We think of the Cross, and remember that Jesus Christ came to take away sins; we think of the Resurrection, and enter into the spirit and rest of our Redeemer's triumph. We shall be delivered from all evil; Thou wilt clothe us as with white linen, and there shall be no stain of sin upon us for ever. Now, Lord, open Thy truth and open our hearts, and let us listen as those who expect great revelations from heaven. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON JESUS CHRIST AND ZACCHÆUS.

Let me ask you to accompany me in reading part of the 19th chapter of the Gospel by Luke, beginning with the first verse:—

"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke xix. 1—10.

You may build God out of cities, or you may throw open the city gates and bid Him welcome with all reverence and thankfulness. You cannot build Him out with common masonry. He can crumble our rocky walls to pieces, and drive the ploughshare through the foundations of our

fortresses; He can touch the mountains, and they will go up before Him as the smoke of incense; wherever mere power is required, God can break us down by a stroke. How then, you will say, is it possible to build God out of the city? I answer, by corrupt institutions, by depraved laws, by tricks of trade, by knavery and fraud, by selfish dispositions and oppressive usages, by forgery, by unjust balances, by defective measures, by practical lying, by false-heartedness, it is possible to build God out of a city more thoroughly than He could be excluded by the most elaborate masonry. Ancient Jericho attempted to enclose herself within solid walls, but men appointed by God threw down all her boasted defences. Can anything resist the thunder of the march which is commanded by God? When men walk according to the Divine order, when they step in harmony with the rhythm of the Divine movement, they overturn the rocks, and cast the mountains into the sea. Yet, alas! there is a region in which Omnipotence itself is weakness: even a child can shut the door of its heart against God, and Almightiness may be defied by an evil will! Jericho was favoured of God in exceeding measure — bountifully supplied with water, having a tropical climate, her palm trees equalling the palms of Egypt, rich with fruits, spices, and perfumes, growing in abundance the sweet-smelling camphire and the balm of Gilead; yet, while the beasts of the field, the dragons and the owls (Isaiah iv. 20) honoured the Most High, she departed from her Maker, and praised not the goodness of her Lord. She trusted in her walls, and confided in the strength of her arm, until God smote her by the breath of His mouth! Gladly do we come to the words before us, as marking a new era in the annals of Jericho. I pause to say that Jesus is passing through our own city; and that to-day, busy as we are with the claims of daily life, we may see His beauty and learn His will.

"And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich."

A whole paragraph devoted to the delineation of one man's life, whilst so many great subjects are hardly touched upon in the Christian Scriptures. Yet let us not complain of what looks to us like the capriciousness and incompleteness of Divine revelation, for in these portrayals of individuals, we have not only the most practical aspects of the Christian faith, but we get nearer to God than would otherwise have been possible. When we see Jesus Christ face to face with an individual sinner, we see the whole scheme of redemption as it were in miniature; and we have the advantage of concentration; our minds are not distracted

by the bewilderment which is occasioned by a vast scale of operation; everything is brought to a point; and to us is given the benefit of the conciseness of individuality. Does not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of Divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now exist upon it. We shall see God's love perhaps more vividly displayed, because more intensely concentrated, in the case of one man than when applied to the necessities of the whole world. Each man should have a paragraph of Christian history specially his own. Is *your* life to be found in Christian history? Can you point to any record of a personal interview with the Saviour? Blessed are you whose lives are part of a great unwritten Bible, which is continually before God.

"And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature."

Let me take out of this verse three words which set forth the highest object of human life; these three words are—"*To see Jesus*"! Zacchæus sought to see Him through natural curiosity, yet such curiosity may be turned to the highest uses; Zacchæus sought only to see the *Man*, but in the end he saw the *Saviour;* he desired to see a wonder, and in the end he was made into a wonder himself. So it is evermore,—a man is made either infinitely better or infinitely worse by coming into contact with Jesus Christ; the Gospel kills or makes alive. This man found a difficulty in attempting to realize his wish. Is it not so with some of us who are listening to this story to-day? Zacchæus was little; every man is little somewhere. The signature of defect is upon every character; we cannot write a complete biography of any man without having to use this word little, in one relation or another. Men are truly little when they are little in spiritual force, in moral sympathy and tender-heartedness, in appreciation of objects that are noble, progressive, sublime. Any other littleness is but a trivial defect; this is a mortal blemish. Hear how the descriptive words go in the case of Zacchæus—*chief, rich, little!* It is possible for a man to read his life in this fashion, and to complain that it has been set on a descending scale; but it is also possible to reverse the order of these epithets, and so to get a more inspiring view of life. He will then say, not chief, rich, little, but little, rich, chief! Take care how you read your life! Some lives may be read thus—little, less, nothing! If we look at those who are higher than ourselves, we may become censorious critics of the Divine way;

but if we make ourselves familiar with those who are in the lowest positions of life, suffering pain, hunger, loneliness, we shall abound in grateful praises to the Giver of all good. Did Zacchæus give up his object because of the difficulty of the situation? Let us read:—

"And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way."

He never would have been chief among the publicans and rich if he had succumbed to difficulties. His character was brought out by opposition. I contend, that whatever a man's disadvantages may be, he can see Jesus Christ if he so determine in his heart. There are men, now-a-days, who profess that they have endeavoured to see Jesus Christ, but have been kept back by the press of sects, sceptics, speculators, critics, commentators, and controversialists; but, in the face of an incident like this, the triviality of such pretence is made evident. I allow that there is a great press of the sort described; no doubt it is, more or less, a difficulty to urge one's way through the throng surrounding Jesus Christ, yet there is a sycamore tree up which we may climb if we are truly in earnest. Zacchæus was little, but he could run; Zacchæus was short of stature, but he could climb. How very shocking—how manifestly improper of one who was chief among the publicans and rich, to be seen running along the road and climbing up a tree! Such enthusiasm in pursuit of his object is in keeping with the whole character of the man. Are you willing, if need be, to go out of the so-called regular way to see the Saviour, or are you sacrificing your destiny to the tyrannous claims of conventionality? Hear me! I exhort you to climb up any tree, to enter any church, from which you can most clearly see the face of the Redeemer. Break up your old associations, cast off your creeds and usages, and incur the censure of established proprieties, rather than not see the Friend of sinners. Incidents like this make me impatient of all the excuses which are urged in explanation of not accepting the salvation of Jesus Christ. Can we not do as Zacchæus did? What is the value of our earnestness, if it do not enable us to overcome difficulties? No excuse should detain us, except such as we can tell Jesus Christ himself. Remember that it is written, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way." The Saviour himself acknowledges the difficulty, yet He never says it is insurmountable, and never promises that it shall protect men from the consequences of unbelief. Oh, ye men who are exhausting yourselves in the pursuit of riches; ye who rise early and retire late, that you may increase your worldly substance; you that are prepared to make any sacrifice of strength and

time, that you may compete successfully in the strife of scholarship; you that are prepared to encounter every form of suffering and danger, that you may extend your knowledge of the world and your influence among men as legislators and economists, say not in this sanctuary that you have been driven back from seeking Jesus Christ by some petty inconvenience or contemptible barrier! Sobriety is undoubtedly the snare of some men; they must needs take their first considerations from what is called prudence, or whilst they are deliberating whether it be proper to adopt some extraordinary method of attaining their object, the Saviour passes by without being seen. Better run the risk which comes of the intoxication of enthusiasm, than be rendered powerless by a benumbing conventionality. Zacchæus would never have been the man that he was, had he been incapable of enthusiasm; he would have succumbed to propriety, where he overcame by a noble passion.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Observe the development which is traced in this verse. Jesus Christ *looked*, *saw*, and *said*. It is possible to look without seeing; many men can look upon the throngs of the world without emotion; human history has to them no deep significance; in their eyes men are but customers, clients, patrons; the idea of immortality never mingles with their coarse thinking. On the other hand, it is possible both to look and to *see;* to the highest type of mind, the sight of a crowd brings sadness of heart; every man is seen to be a mystery—to be the bearer of untold sorrow—to be the distracted subject of many ambitions—to be weak through sin, and to be bearing the black seal of death; to such types of mind life becomes one long sigh, by reason of the wickedness which enfeebles and dehumanizes the race. It is possible, however, both to look and to see, yet not to *say*. There is a want of moral courage, even where there is a deep appreciation of the necessities of the case. Many men will tell you, that when they have been brought into contact with men of extreme depravity, they have just been on the point of preaching the Gospel, yet they have foreborne to speak the Word of life. When Christians *look*, and SEE, and SAY, there will go forth into the world such an evangelizing commission as never yet sought the recovery of men. Have you ever spoken to one human creature about his personal salvation? You tell me you have looked upon your friend, and that you have seen the deepest want of his life, yet you have not delivered the message of God to his soul. Believe me, this is not friendship, and that there is a day coming, on which you will feel that in neglecting these

opportunities—you have risked your own salvation. Is it not noticeable, that Jesus Christ addressed Zacchæus by name? To the reverent mind, this circumstance justly suggests the Omniscience of the Son of God. Did not the Lord say unto Moses, "I know thee by name"? We, too, are known in our individuality. If we have set ourselves in any position, ordinary or peculiar, for the purpose of seeing the Saviour, the All-seeing Eye is upon us, and our personal name is associated with the act. How did Zacchæus receive the word that was addressed to him? Did he hesitate? Did he excuse himself on the ground that he had been seeking to gratify merely a natural curiosity? Many persons take up positions of observation in the sanctuary, and when they are personally invited to active service on behalf of Jesus Christ, or closer communion with the Church, they instantly plead a merely general interest, and excuse themselves from consenting to the appeal on most trivial grounds. They turn the sanctuary into a convenience; they make use of the vantage-ground without any pledge of loyalty to the claims of Christ, and treat with coldness the invitations which might call their souls into a most fruitful and glorious development. How did Zacchæus act? Let us read:

"And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully."

This is in striking harmony with all that we have seen of Zacchæus. The man who could run and climb was just the man to make haste in coming down, and to give a joyful answer to such an appeal. Men would be better if we spoke to them more kindly. Take high ground with a man, and you instantly put him on his own defence; speak to him in a conciliating tone, and you may gain audience of his very heart. Be sure, as Christian teachers, there is something in every man to which you can address yourselves with good effect. We may clearly infer from this text, that the unlikeliest men may yield the most blessed results of our ministry. Here is a man, chief among the publicans and rich, despised and avoided by a large portion of society, who returns a joyful answer to the appeal of Christ. Has it not been so in our own experience? Some of the men on whose adhesion we had reckoned most confidently have fallen back into coldness and unbelief; and some whom we had regarded as hopeless, have responded to our ministry with most unexpected and startling joy. We must be more cordial with neglected men. I do not hesitate to say that in all congregations there are men little counted of, or even hardly known, lying under the ban of suspicion, or misunderstood by reason of some social disfavour, who only need to be personally addressed in the language of Christian love, to

yield themselves with overflowing joy to the gentle demands of the Saviour.

"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

What a life of criticism Jesus Christ endured! Always reproached, always suspected, often despised, truly, had He been less than God, He would have abandoned His ministry in disgust and returned to the world whence He proceeded. The whole of the religion of His day was hostile to His spirit and method, and no man entered into sympathy with His world-embracing schemes; His brethren distrusted Him, and His friends fell away from His standard, and He was left to work in loneliness that would have been terrible, but for the Divinity that was in Him. Even the most despised worker amongst us can have but a faint notion of what it is to live under a fire of continual reproach; to have all one's motives misunderstood, to see our whole purpose resented with contempt, to have one's name made synonymous with that of the devil. Think of what was the condition under which Jesus Christ worked, and let us learn from it patiently to endure the contradiction of sinners.

The relation of Jesus Christ to sinners enforces a lesson which the Church has yet to learn. I shall not severely criticise the Church in the exercise of moral discipline, but I shall ask most earnestly, whether the discipline of exclusion should not be followed by the discipline of recovery? It is perfectly right to depose from the honour and privilege of Church standing those who have brought the Church's name into disrepute. Justice to those who have maintained a consistent profession demands this, not to speak of the higher consideration in which Jesus Christ himself is involved; yet, when such deposition has been effected, there should be a most kindly concern on behalf of the Church to recover the excluded. I hold that discipline is not exhausted by the mere act of excision; I question, indeed, whether this is not the lowest aspect of discipline. It is easy to thrust out the offender, but not so easy to go after him and to say, that having fulfilled the law of penalty, we have come to attempt the law of restoration. I am afraid we have not been filled with God's love towards backsliders; we have not pursued them with our prayers; we have not stood around them in masses to put before their feet every possible impediment in the road to hell. Which of us would dare to go into the house of a publicly known sinner, such as Zacchæus was thought to be, for the purpose of drawing him towards deeper life? Our own virtue has often been so feeble, that only by associating with the best men could we escape the reputation

of being vicious. Only where there is superabounding spiritual life can there be a graceful descent into the haunts of evil which defies the tongue of scandal, and ignores the murmuring of outraged respectability.

This verse shows very strikingly that the path of duty often lies across the prejudices of society. It is not an easy thing for one man, poor and friendless, to set himself against the current of public opinion. A word of caution is, however, necessary here, for there are self-opinionated men enough, who boast of their singularity, and imagine themselves to be somebody, because they are foolhardy enough to throw out a challenge to the whole world. Singularity, considered strictly in itself, is no virtue. When it is the expression of self-confidence, it is neither more nor less than detestable affectation ; when it is the expression of intelligent and anxious conviction, animated by a profound humility, and dictated by a self-sacrificing desire to do good, it is noble and praiseworthy. Men should not aim at singularity ; but, being forced into it by their loyal constancy to Jesus Christ, they should not fear its consequences. Some consciences seem to describe an eccentric orbit, and in doing so, become whimsical and fantastical in what, from want of a better word, may be called their moral phases. Out of this eccentricity there comes a narrow and censorious criticism, which gives just offence to the most honourable and generous minds. Jesus Christ was never singular merely for the sake of singularity. It was the divinity of His virtue which compelled the loneliness of His life—more earthliness would have meant more popularity.

"And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

You have seen flowers which have been closed during the night, opening to the morning sun ; so is it with human hearts shut up in the cold dark night of selfishness, when the sun of righteousness arises upon them with healing in his wings. Zacchæus would never have known himself if he had not first known Jesus Christ. It is ever noteworthy that by contact with the Saviour men become greater, and to their fuller strength is added all the charm of generosity. In this case there is a noticeable combination of liberality and justice ; the poor and the wronged alike feel the blessed influence of this man's renewal ; all with whom He had to do were to be the better for his having received Jesus Christ into his heart. This kind of evidence ought to form the most powerful vindication of Christianity. Renewed men explain God's revelations to the soul. Instead of saying, Examine this or that doctrine,

we ought to be able to point to the poor man who is being comforted, and to the wronged man who is being compensated, and to say, *These* are the claims which we set up in exposition and defence of Christian truth. Let me beseech you to think of Jesus Christ, not only as the Saviour, but as the *Revealer* of men. See how all generous resolutions, all Divine aspirations, and all unselfish impulses result from contact with Him. In the presence of such evidences of new life, I am constrained to say that no man need hesitate to decide whether or not he is really under the influence of the Son of God. He has only to put to himself such questions as these : Am I doing my utmost to repair the wrongs of the past? Do I measure everything by a Divine standard? Do I make myself the centre of the circle in which I move, or do I refer everything to Jesus Christ as the one Lawgiver and Judge? Am I the friend of the poor? Is my presence as a light of hope in the dark places of oppression and misery? These are the questions that determine the quality of our manhood. We have heard of professing Christians who were narrow in their creed, selfish in their policy, grovelling in their dispositions, and illiberal in their judgments; we have no hesitation in charging upon them the high crime of dishonouring the Name that is above every name. It is the glory of Christianity that it ennobles human life. Do you know of any man who has been made less true, less generous, less compassionate, less forbearing, since he identified himself with the Cross? My bold and lofty challenge on behalf of Jesus Christ is this, that He meets man dwarfed and crippled by sin, and glorifies him with the dignity, and enriches him with the blessedness of eternal life. Let men receive the Spirit of the Saviour, and every transaction of their lives will be simplified, elevated and made pure, their business will be regenerated, their houses will become sanctuaries, and their whole character a living persuasive defence of all that is wise, and true, and good. We do not for one moment deny the heightening and refining effect of intellectual education ; but we have seen evidence enough in the history of the world under all conditions of civilization, to justify the opinion that man's best estate, apart from Jesus Christ, is but as the artificial plant to the living and fruitful garden.

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

Have you had such a visitation in your house? Truly, there are special days in our life which seem to throw all other days into insignificance. Chiefest and brightest of them is the day on which salvation becomes the culminating fact of our history. I am afraid that this word

salvation is becoming somewhat unfamiliar; nor am I sure that it is always used in its fullest meaning, even by those who are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is possible to think of salvation as a distant blessing, but Jesus Christ speaks of it as a present reality. He gives eternal life to men *now*, and we fall short of the happiest realization of our privileges, if we allow the heart to dwell upon anything less than the immortality which has been given to us by the Son of God. It may not always be possible to point out the exact day on which salvation came to our houses; I do not press for the identification of mere dates, but I do contend that it is impossible for Jesus Christ to have been received into any house as Redeemer and King, without His entry having made such an impression as can never be effaced from the memory or dislodged from the liberated and rejoicing heart. It ought not to be a merely sentimental exercise to recall the hour in which we received the blessings of salvation. Men are poor when they give up the great memories of the soul. It is one of the most blessed enjoyments of the Christian life to fall back upon hallowed recollections, and to summon them to our aid in anticipating a future on which there may rest somewhat of the shadow of doubt or fear. Men can say, this day I was ruined in trade; this day I undertook a most important commercial engagement; this day I fell under the power of a terrible disease; this day I came into possession of great riches—blessed are they amongst whose recollections is the transcendent day on which Jesus Christ set up His kingdom in their hearts.

Whilst dwelling upon this verse, it is important to observe the view which Jesus Christ takes of Zacchæus. The multitude had called him "a man who is a sinner;" Jesus Christ openly declared him to be "a son of Abraham." Little natures delight to take lowering views of human life; it is the delight of great souls to give high interpretation and sublime significance to the capacity and destiny of men. See the mercifulness of the Saviour's judgments! If there is one spark of light in us, He increases it to a great flame; if He can possibly classify with the children of Abraham, He will never identify us with the sons of perdition. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men.

After this came the last grand word, worthy of being written in letters of fine gold—

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

Had men not been lost, He never would have come as a man. In what form we might have seen Him it is impossible to say. To our sin we

owe His incarnation ; what if sin shall prove to have brought us views of God which could never have been seen in the light of unfallen virtue ? As we see most truly what is in man when Jesus Christ reveals him, may it not also be true, that we see most deeply into the heart of God when He is moved to the condemnation of sin and the redemption of the sinner ? It is premature to say what part sin will play in the economy of the universe ; we know little about it now ; at best, it is but morning twilight ; yet, if through the sin we have even now seen so much of the mercy, there may remain still brighter and more inspiring revelations, and hell itself may be made to contribute towards a fuller understanding of the infinite love and glory of God. Turning away from the mystery, let us all take heart in presence of an incident so graphic and touching as this ; let no sinner despair ; let none who would see Jesus give up the noble purpose. He receiveth sinners still ; He braves the reproaches of the narrow-minded still ; He is mighty to save—He is unwilling to destroy.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, November 4th, 1869.

The Prayer.

Blessed Saviour we have desired this quiet hour, as weary men sigh for rest. We promised our souls that they should be tranquil in their Father's house; come, then, with all Thy great peace, and give us to feel the calmness of Thine own nature. We bless Thee for the sanctuary in which we learn what we are, and what by Thy grace we may become. We thank Thee for a place of repentance, where we can shed the tears of a true contrition and cry, "God be merciful unto us sinners," with an assurance that Thou wilt hear and answer. Make this hour precious unto us. May it be unto us as many hours, by reason of the abounding spiritual enjoyment which we shall now realize. May the cup of our heart overflow; may our eyes behold the King in His beauty; may our whole nature respond to all the gracious influences of Thy kingdom. Say to the storm of our heart, "Be still." Speak Thou to the vision of our mind, and our eyes shall look upon Thee: open Thou a highway to our soul, and come Thou, whose right it is to reign upon the throne. The Lord's blessing be multiplied upon us; the Lord's joy be our gladness and our song; and unto the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, shall be the kingdom, and power, and the glory, evermore. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON HEALING THE WITHERED HAND.

Let me ask you to accompany me in reading part of the third chapter of the Gospel by Mark, beginning at the first verse :—

"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."—St. Mark, iii. 1—5.

Jesus Christ instantly detected everything that was wrong in the society into which He entered. The moment He went into the synagogue, He felt that there was a man there with a withered hand. All the Scribes and Pharisees might have gone into the synagogue, and that withered hand would not have troubled, would not have reported itself to them, because they had not sufficient wholeness of manhood and perfectness of purity to feel the pain and the distress which come of the presence of that which is defective or blemished. The artist shall go into a building and be troubled by it exceedingly; a thousand laymen shall be there, and be quite comfortable. The artist's eye instantly detects the false proportion, the line that is out of course, and his eye will turn to it; he may put very severe repressive restraints upon himself; he may make many a vow to be blind to the defect; but the

trouble will come again and again upon him, because on that side of his life he is highly cultured, so much so as to be almost perfect. And by so much as any man is himself perfect, does he instantly detect what is defective and imperfect in other people. You and I might be able to hear a psalm-tune and enjoy it, but a highly-trained musician, in going into the sanctuary, might be sent nearly crazy by it, because he is so highly trained in that department of his nature, that a wrong note, a wrong tone, a halt misplaced, a quaver wrongly directed, will instantly touch his soul—the soul which is not merely musical, but music itself. And we who were enjoying the psalmody very much cannot understand the sensitive men who are driven half frantic because one note happens to be a little awry, or not to be delivered with sufficient emphasis and expressiveness. So it is; the more a man has life in him the more he feels the presence of death—the more sensitive he is, the more he shrinks, not only from evil, but from the very *appearance* of evil, so that those who are in a lower moral region hardly understand his shrinking and revulsion. Two persons shall go into the same room; one of them shall be perfectly comfortable, and quiet, and easy, though in the room there are a hundred signs of disorder, not perhaps amounting to positive chaos, but strongly tending in that direction—there are persons who have no objection to chaos itself—but the other person instantly, on going into the room, without being inquisitive, without being prying, without trying to look, *must* see all the points of disorder; and there will come into the observer—in proportion as he is orderly—a sense of distress; there will be complaint; there will be uneasiness; there will be a feeling almost approaching resentment.

Now, we know something of these things in our own life; we know something about the influence which this keen sensitiveness has in our relations to one another; in our views of life, in our intercourse with men generally; but all this finds its culmination, its absolute eternal perfection in Him in whom there was no spot, no blemish, holy as His Father was Holy; perfect with all the essential glory of the Godhead. So when He came into the synagogue he instantly *felt* that there was a man there with a withered hand. It needed not that the man should be told to stand up to be pointed out. Jesus Christ *felt* that He was there; and this comes of the perfectness of His nature, the wholeness of His manhood, the purity and completeness of His life. So you will always find it. The more life a man has the more sorrow he has.

Increase a man's life, and you increase his sorrow and distress; give him life more abundantly, and he will shed tears where other people would not understand his weeping. He will sigh and tremble where other persons cannot at all enter into the mystery of his life. What, then, if He who had all life, and who, when He gave life gave *Eternal* —what if He should have lived His three short dying years in a sigh, in a sorrow which at last broke His heart, and which to-day remains the mystery, yet the hope of the universe?

"They watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth."

This gives us a view of what I may term the passive difficulties which lie in the great worker's way. There are difficulties that only seem to rouse our courage; and there are difficulties we can make nothing of,—without shape, and without name, without address, and yet there they are in the man's way, and they are oftentimes very awkward difficulties indeed. I find, now that we have got to use long fine names for ugly things, that this has come to be the name of the class of difficulty to which I refer, namely, *negative opposition.* Do you know the meaning of that? Persons who represent this kind of difficulty, do not fight a man; they do not say, "We mean to oppose you here, and there, and yonder, and these are the weapons which we intend to use when we come to fight;" but they just sit by and *watch.* You cannot kill a man for *watching;* you cannot bring him to church discipline for *watching;* you cannot make him ashamed of himself for *watching.* He is a stumbling-block, a difficulty, a great wedge of ice in the Church, and yet his crime is summed up in *watching.* The enemies of the Saviour "watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath-day." Always watched! How few kind human eyes lighted upon Him, beamed encouragement upon Him! There was always a cold criticism in the eyes that looked upon Him, always something cheerless and discouraging! If it had not been for the abundance of His love, and the perfectness of His manhood, He could not have stood so long before such a trial of malignant watching, passive opposition, and active hostility. Are there people who are watching any of you in your work, that they may accuse

you, if you should happen to offend some little technicality? Are there people who would oppose you because you are breaking down something that is ancient and traditional, and who themselves revere something merely because it has a covering of grey hairs upon it? Follow the Master! not defiantly, not haughtily, not self-sufficiently, but with the lowliness of dignity and the meekness of conscious power in Christ, and do your work, and leave them to give an account of their watching. But were they the only persons who were watching the Saviour? Let us get correct notions about this, if we would lay hold of life with anything like masterliness and certainty. Under such circumstances, perhaps, some of us would have seen only the watching critics. But there are other watchers. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, His angels are ministering spirits, and all His heaven seems to gather round good, redeeming men. With these poor, dying eyes, we see only the human watchers, but we are hemmed in with God, and if we succumb to the human watchers, who can measure the disappointment of those other lookers-on who are not seen, and yet who come nearer than the hosts of the enemy, encircling us with fire, and watching for us, lest we hesitate in a critical hour? My friend, thou wilt often fall before cold, searching, critical eyes, if thou dost only look on the material side of things; but know thou that all the world is God's Synagogue—God's Temple; and if thou art seeking to cure any poor man who may be in it, God is watching, angels are watching—none can number the watchers! Turn the eyes of the heart towards these better witnesses and defy, not with human spite, but with God's sufficiency, the watching criticisms of men who would let any poor wretch die rather than break the slightest rule of propriety, or offend the shallowest traditions of the fathers.

That "Sabbath Day" was an awful temptation to these people. It does happen so oftentimes, that what is religious becomes irreligion to people who touch it in the wrong spirit. To think of a number of educated, and, I dare say, very able men in their way, making such great blunders in life, and keeping themselves back from such good works because of the Sabbath Day! What is the lesson there? This: it is possible to turn God's gifts into a perverted use, possible so to use the Bible as to offend men, possible to set up even a religious institution, and let men trip over it into hell. Your religious

institutions will become stumbling-blocks, if they are not used religiously; and your Sabbath days will be days of loss to the world, if you do not fill their every hour with the Spirit of Him who is Lord of the Sabbath. There is always this choice set before men; the choice of an institution, or of healing a man; the choice between a law and a life; the choice between the little and the great; the choice between the accidental and the essential. Well, what are we to do, then, when the choice is set before us? *Follow the Master!* I would never offend any man's prejudices if I could help it, but if he sets up his prejudices between me and a man with a withered hand, or a man with a dying soul, I must for Christ's sake, and in memory of Christ's mercy, trample under foot his prejudice, and go to my work. I would not offend any man—nor would any of my Christian brethren—who may have deep convictions about this doctrine or that, this institution or the other; but we are followers of Christ, and Christ went through the Sabbath Day to do the work of God; and we must drive clear through everything that stands between us and the great mission to which we are called by Christ the Saviour, and by the Holy Ghost.

"And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill?"

These are the lofty challenges of Christianity. Sometimes Christianity is represented as a kind of half Divine, half human thing, that comes in with a vast bundle of manuscripts for the purpose of collating this reading with that, and for the purpose of fighting a battle with grammars and lexicons, or for the purpose of getting up a great literary controversy. Now, I have no objection to sound criticism; in fact, the more we have of it the better. I do not say Christianity has no argument founded on the letter—nothing of the kind. Every manuscript that Christianity holds in her hand I would respect; I would encourage every man who goes in that direction to find defences of the faith and illustrations of the history of doctrine, but Christianity is something more—something diviner than that. Christianity comes into the world and says, "Is it lawful to kill men or to save them?" Christianity asks, "Shall men be lost or shall they be saved?" Christianity says, "I can debate with you under proper circumstances about all these literary and all these historical difficulties," but the grand questions, the

all-absorbing and all-inclusive inquiry which Christianity has to put to the world is this, "Will you be lost or will you be saved?" And on that question I have risked my eternal destiny, and I ask you who have not done so already, to risk yours too. If I were here only to defend the letter of the Christian religion or the history, you and I might spend a long time in useless talk; it might, perhaps, be a little useful, or it might be altogether useless, but what I have to ask you is this, to risk your destiny on the belief that Christianity (which is only the impersonal name for Christ) *can save men's souls.* I do not say that unless you can answer every difficult question, unless you can reconcile all apparent discrepancies, unless you can theologise your creed, and ask the highest questions, and discuss the deepest problems in divinity, therefore you know nothing about Christianity. I say to every man, woman, and child, *You may touch the hem of the Saviour's garment;* and so full of life is He, that to do even *that* is to begin to live; to do only *that* is to enter upon immortality. So I put it thus—To *you* who are learned men, skilled in language, trained in controversy, I say, "Go and work out your proper vocation—it is a great one, it is one whose importance within its own sphere can hardly be exaggerated;" but I say to *all* men, "Take your stand upon the saving power of Christian truth. Refer to your own history, point to the history of ten thousand others, and risk everything, not upon the discussion of a letter, but upon the salvation of the soul." When will men who write books, and criticisms, and offer opinions upon great subjects, when will they look at the *highest* aspects of Christianity, when will they answer this loftiest challenge, "I have come not to destroy men's lives but to save them"? I would that, now and then at least, they would look at these highest challenges and invitations of the Gospel, that they would grapple with this question, "Can Jesus Christ save men or not?" In order to get to that question, they may have to go along a very hard and dusty road; if they choose to do so, they *may;* yet I am confident there is a shorter path to that great central inquiry; and if any of you have been fighting merely on the outside, and debating about comparatively little things, things which of necessity must perish out of the way, as the ages come and go, let me ask you to get into the innermost sanctuary of Divine truth, to lay hold of the Cross, and say, "Can this Christian religion work out the perfect redemption and salvation of the world?"

Jesus Christ takes His stand upon this great inquiry, instead of beginning the question on any lower ground to which His enemies would have been only too glad to have drawn Him. He stood up in the midst of them and said, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life or to kill?" If He had asked some lower question, many a critic would have answered Him instantly, but asking a question like this, broad as heaven, divine as God, they held their peace.

"Then when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

Look upon this, if you please, as a picture. *There* you have the enemies of the new faith sitting sullen, silent, watching with many a bitter feeling expressing itself on the darkening brow; *there* you have the poor man with the withered hand, who has no time for controversy, for mere word fighting and fencing; and *there* you have the Son of God, looking round Him upon these men, perhaps the flush of anger upon His face, and yet over it all the shadow of grief. A man is not righteously angry unless there be sorrow in his indignation; no man can be truly joyful until he touches just the borderland of sorrow in his very rapture; no man can be truly angry, according to the anger of Christ, if there be not in him grief, under it all, over it all, because of the hardness of man's heart. Now, Jesus Christ had to do one of two things; He had to fall before those who were watching Him, and thus become the popular man of the hour, or he had to turn round and be the saviour of *one man.* This brings upon us the sophism of numbers, the temptation of majorities, and the shallow things that are talked about minorities, and the like. Here is Jesus Christ, there is what may be called the crowd, between them is the one man; what shall Christ do? Say to the man with the withered hand, "Go away; this is not the proper time to come; come to-morrow, and we shall see what can be done for thee"? and thus, perhaps, have bought the smiles of those who were looking on; but does the great man ever ask who is going to smile upon him, if he does this or that? The moment a man can begin to ask himself, "Shall I be smiled upon for this?" I do not care how good a thing it is about which he is going to ask the question, he is wrong, he is false, he is selfish, and his work shall be burned with fire. Jesus Christ was

the Saviour of the one man! Follow Christ in this particular as in others! If there is anybody to be saved, save him; do not let the applause of the hour be the criterion by which we move; if we can do aught towards saving a man, *that* is our duty, and God will give us the reward. Have you and I ever been kept from doing good to anybody, because we knew that a certain number of people would be opposed to us, and make censorious remarks upon us? Well, if we trust to ourselves, we ought to fall under human censure; but if we work with God, then, beyond all human censure, we hear the voice of Him that approves us, and whose approbation is strength. Is there a man here with a withered hand? Is there a man here with the blemish of sin upon him? Is there a man who feels that he is not a whole man? Is there a man who feels his incompleteness, and consequent disquiet? Let me speak to such. *Withered hands come of withered hearts;* if there were no withered hearts there would be no withered hands—make the fountain clear, and the stream will be pure. So, when I stand here as a Christian teacher, I have to say, the *heart* must be made right before the life can be rectified. The man's soul must be brought into harmony with God through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost; and then as to withered hands and incidental defects, why, they are but the question of a passing hour, they will be thrown off, and the soul, renewed in its youth, shall never know what it is to be old. Are you afraid of anybody looking on? Do you say that watching eyes are upon you; that you feel more like the man with the withered hand than the watching crowd; and do you say that if there were nobody looking, you would go to Christ; there are your fellow-labourers, your associates in business, your equals in the social circle; they are all watching you. If you can think about these things, you do not yet feel the burden you are carrying; when a man does really feel the poignancy of true sorrow for sin, when it lays hold of him, and absorbs him, and dominates his thoughts and his whole being, then he cares not who may be watching; he cares not who may be suspicious; he says, "I am the man to be saved, yonder is the man who can save me; if I perish I will go;—Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." If any man shall say so great a saying as that in Christ's hearing, he shall have given to him not only healing, but Eternal Life. Is it needful that I should tarry long to persuade men that all incompleteness comes of sin, and that all

sin can be met destructively only by the power of Jesus Christ? Our hearts almost fail us, when we repeat, times without number, to the same deaf ears, that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world, and when we attempt, after innumerable failures, to persuade blunt-minded and superficial reformers that, in order to make the fruit good, they must first make the tree itself good. This is the vital difference between work that is distinctively *Christian* and all other work. Jesus Christ worked from the *heart*. Setting Himself at the very fountain of life, He sought, by healing the spring, to purify the stream. Other workers address themselves, it may be benevolently enough, to the mere symptoms; and their service is appreciated by men who have no insight into causation, blind readers of the tragic story of the human world, but rightly estimated by the higher men, who view life from the all-commanding elevation of Christ's Cross. I do not say one word against associations established for the purpose of relieving bodily distress, or educating the popular mind, so as to enable men to adapt the discoveries of science to the extension of social comfort. As collateral agencies these are of the utmost importance, but as remedies for dead hearts and alien spirits they are the most empty and tormenting mockeries. Christianity includes within its benign purpose all social improvements, all bodily recoveries, all domestic peace, all national progress. To work apart from Christianity is to fail in touching the world's disease. As well may you seek to raise the dead, by re-lettering their tombstones, as to give men the highest life by improving, even to the point of decoration, their social circumstances. Paint your cheeks, in order to give yourselves health; dress the putrid bodies of the dead, and set them up at the banquet table, in order to recall the vanished joys of your household; surround the drivelling idiot with the profoundest books and the choicest works of art, in order to show your skill in recovering his fallen mind; do these things, and you will act with infinitely more reason than they act who banish Christ from their counsels, and seek to dispossess the devil by enlarging and refining his habitation in the human heart.

What, then, is the world-wide, ever-abiding truth taught by such pathetic incidents as those which have occupied our attention for the last three Thursdays? Is it not clear that Jesus Christ identified himself with the men who most needed his sympathy, and that he was not to be turned from his purpose by adverse public opinion? This should be the unchanging course of His Church. We shall make little or no impression upon the miscalled righteousness of the age; we must go down to its sins and speak the word of hope to its sinners, and by our gentleness make lowly men great. The sinner is the client of the Church. The despised man, wherever he may be, is to be sought out and honoured by the servant of Jesus Christ. Our mission never changes. It is right to study the times and to adapt methods to conditions, but the one immutable call of God is to seek and to save the *lost*. This is to be done in Jesus Christ's spirit. Not with ostentation, not with the stoop of conscious superiority, not in foolish defiance of ordinary habits, but in simplicity and with godly sincerity, with all gentleness and purity, neither courting popularity nor shunning reproach. We hear of "respectable congregations," of "very rich congregations," of "very select and fashionable congregations;" I have no sympathy with such descriptions. Look at Jesus Christ's congregations; see the poor, the miserable, the friendless, the outcast, that crowded around Him, and let us try to be as attractive to such as he was. The Church is departing far from Jesus Christ in many things. The Church is critical, selfish, narrow-minded; not, indeed, the true Church, but the Church so-called; there is still, blessed be God, an inner circle filled with the love of Christ and working mightily, with all patience and zeal, for the recovery of men. Our societyism must be broken up or thoroughly modified; individuality must be developed; official appointments must be revised; effort must be concentrated; a holier spirituality of mind must be cultivated; if we would approach a realization of our high calling. It is quite possible for a Sunday-school teacher to be doing more good than an archbishop—yes, possible for a teacher of the most destitute to be as the angel of God, whilst the lordliest director of the Church may have no standing recognised and honoured by Jesus Christ. Oh, that we might know the mystery of the *Cross!* Do we *suffer* in our work? Do we bow our stiff necks to the yoke of loving yet exhausting labour? Or do we walk on velvet, and

enjoy every luxury of the world? May we never forget that Christianity without the Cross is Christianity without Christ, and that heaven is probably never reached by the sunny and flowery slopes of worldly respectability. In memory of our last three subjects, Zaccheus, the sinner, the good Samaritan, and the healing of the man with the withered hand, let us encourage all who work for the heart's recovery. Opponents you will have; discouragements will fall to your lot; the multitude will murmur, the priest and Levite will not know you; the technicalists will sullenly watch; your business, however, is not with *them*, but with the *Master*. Do not strive with them. You cannot thaw the thick ice of their heartlessness—you cannot plough the rock, or humanise those who withstood the Saviour Himself: go to others; there is field enough for all courage and skill! I am afraid some of us may be too anxious to secure respectable recognition for our work, and by so much may fall below the spirit which animated and sustained the Saviour. The work must be cared for, on its own account; then shall our inspiration be unquenchable by the floods of opposition.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, November 11th, 1869.

The Prayer.

Blessed Saviour, may our hearts be full of love. May all who name Thy name show their love to the world by many convincing signs. May we be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another; and may we vindicate our profession of faith in Jesus Christ by adding to godliness brotherly kindness. May we be one in Christ as Christ is one with the Father; and as we believe that the Lord our God is one Lord, so may His Church be distinguished by loving and intelligent unity, and may it powerfully impress the world with the beauty and dignity and nobleness of Christian brotherhood. May no root of bitterness spring up to trouble us; may we be as a band of men whose hearts God has touched—fearing God, we shall know no other fear; and loving Jesus Christ, all other affection shall be swallowed up in that great homage. Let Thy Spirit dwell with us; let our minds be enlightened with a light that is heavenly; and may our hearts be touched as with fire from the altar that is above. May the devil have no place in us. May his unclean altar have no place in our hearts. May his speech be a forgotten tongue, and may no trace of his image be discoverable in our countenance. Fill us with thine own love! And to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be universal and immortal praise. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON SO AM I; OR, HUMAN SIMILARITIES.

"Whereinsoever any is bold . . . I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I."—2 CORINTHIANS xi. 21, 22.

MEN are sometimes called upon to say distinctly what they are, and to speak about themselves with the utmost plainness of speech. It is not all egotism that is called egotism; if egotism were to be determined by the mere use of the first personal pronoun, then the New Testament, in some of its parts at least, is the most egotistical book in the world. I think that truth has a great deal to gain from the sharpness of individual expression and testimony. The fine gold of true doctrine loses nothing by being united with different images and superscriptions, provided always, it be clearly understood that the gold is God's and the stamping alone is man's. I have observed in life, that when personal experiences and positions are compared in a candid spirit, that we are a good deal like one another; that when heart speaks to heart a universal language is employed, and that altogether there is not a little sympathy and rhythm in human lives, when men shake themselves out of the gilded shackles of tradition and artificialism. To a very large extent, the expression, "So am I," might be addressed by Christian men to one another. Now and then, no doubt, the expression might occasion surprise, as being quite unexpected and at first almost incredible; but what men want in this higher life is to get a little nearer to one another, and the expression, "So am I," will be the watchword of a noble and indissoluble brotherhood. The subject of the morning may be called "So am I;" or, "The union of men deeper than external circumstances"—"So am I;" or, "Human union vital, not accidental"—"So am I;" or, "The unexpected oneness of men;" and I have chosen that great subject with a view to breaking down various distinctions, and with a hope of showing in some degree that our differences are but so many facets of one diamond, which Christ will regard as the choicest

and costliest jewel in His crown—the diamond of recovered and sanctified humanity. How varied, how comprehensive, are the subjects on which we, as Christian thinkers and Christian servants, are agreed! When for an hour we can deliver ourselves from the pressure of our infirmities and characteristic littlenesses as finite creatures; when we can compare the deepest beliefs of our heart, and the highest experiences of our nature, how truly one we are after all, how diversified soever may be the badges and the labels by which we are distributed into various classifications. I do not address one denomination now, I trust —except in the highest sense of a Christian denomination. We have brought many little ecclesiastical differences into this one house, but I venture to say that there is amongst us, whatever may be the denomination we represent, a vital union, a union of love, a oneness of faith admitting of the most diversified expression, yet essentially and unchangeably one. Take the Church, and deal with it in its general sections, and what have we? What unity of belief we have in all the highest questions in theology; speaking generally, speaking almost universally, we believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; we believe in the sinfulness of men; we believe that the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is God's answer to the great difficulty of sin; we believe that there is no way to the Father or to Heaven but through Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world; we believe that the work of regeneration and sanctification is to be done by God the Holy Ghost; and I contend that being one upon such points as these, any little differences that may arise, or any comparatively great diversities of opinion that may be developed, should not keep us back from that hearty, intelligent, loving unity, which after all is the grandest exhibition of Christian life which the world can understand, and which society can feel. We have acknowledged differences; but I believe there is nothing in these differences that is vital, if properly understood. Let us look at the points upon which we do agree, and let special prominence be given to those points. I do not know that every denomination should break in upon the same village, and insist upon forcing its own particular notions of ecclesiastical government upon the inhabitants. If the Wesleyan Methodists have fully provided for the Christian teachings of any given population, why should the Independents resolve to have a chapel of their own? And, on the other hand, if the Independents have made adequate provision for the religious instruction of a village, why should the Wesleyan Methodists open a room, and compete for the support of the people? We are saved by Jesus Christ, and not by special forms of Church government; it is the Cross, and not the Church book which leads to heaven. It is allowed

to us that we provoke one another to love and good works; but when ambitious rivalry takes the place of fraternal stimulus, the uppermost hand has been given to the devil.

Are you members of the *Established Church?* "So am I." You and I both believe that the Church ought to be established. Your idea of establishment is to secure permanence, stability, influence, high position in society; so is mine. We may, perhaps, differ somewhat in our definitions of an Established Church. You may have notions that I cannot receive, yet so far as the substantial notion of Established Churches is concerned—so far as it involves everything that is vital and enduring and Divine—you and I are perfectly at one. I should not think of establishing the Church by law; I should as soon think of establishing God's *works* as of establishing God's *word.* I should as soon think of establishing the light of the sun, and appointing legislators to watch over the movements of the stars, as I should think of appointing legislators to look after the purity of God's doctrines and the vitality of God's Word. I believe the Church is established—"On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—and in Christ's establishment of the Church I find all the establishment I want. But then some of my brethren, who are quite as capable of dealing with the question as I am, take a different view; put in something beyond this, which they may consider as of the same quality, and as worthy of the position to which they advance it. I cannot agree with them. Shall we, therefore, be enemies of one another? Shall we be hostile in our attitude? Shall we indulge in acrimonious controversy, and in giving the enemy occasion to rejoice over us? Not at all. Those who believe in a lower earthly establishment, let them say so; let them argue their question with all intelligence and dignity, and vindicate their position with all charity and highmindedness; and let those who believe in an establishment of Divine truth solely by Divine power, so live and so work as *to be themselves* the best argument that can be advanced in favour of such an establishment as that for which they contend. The *Church* will not fail: our little *sects* may change a good deal; our little denominational huts may be considerably overthrown; but God's Church, which God himself has been purposing from eternity to set up in the universe—God's Church, that rests on Christ's person and Christ's work, and that is animated by the Holy Ghost—will never fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's Church shall not pass away. What I want us all to see is this: that we believe in an Established Church; we believe in a Church that is perfectly secure; yet we say its security depends in no degree upon the strength of our arm, but rests entirely on the omnipotence and sufficiency of God.

And whilst we differ upon the ways of setting forth this doctrine, let us cultivate a spirit of brotherly kindness that shall speak even hard words with a gentle emphasis.

Are you *Dissenters?* So am I. The world could never get on as it is at present constituted but for political and religious dissent. The world would fall into stagnation, if men did not take different views of things, and did not assert with becoming language, and at right times, principles that were considered to be principles of righteousness and truth. You dissent from the Church of Rome; some dissent from us; one denomination dissents from every other denomination in some particular, less or greater. There is, therefore, as a matter of fact, this great movement of dissent amongst us, political, religious, social. We dissent from all that is corrupt, from all that is selfish, from all that is merely earthly, from all that would exert an unholy or malign influence upon the morals of society and the progress of mankind. What, then, because we dissent from one another, shall any man set himself up as infallible, as the judge of his brethren, condemning everybody that does not exactly come up to his standard? Shall we regard our dissenting from one another as a licence for hard speaking, for uncharitable construction of one another's spirit and method? Certainly not. If we are *only* dissenters, then are we a miserable horde; if we live in dissent, and breathe in dissent, and move in dissent, and are never easy but when we are dissenting from somebody, and would dissent from ourselves if we were living in the world quite alone, then, I say, I have no sympathy with that kind of intellectual activity; it is a terrible, fearful activity from which I, for one, wish to be placed at a considerable distance. But all that is involved in intelligence of mind, in freeness of heart, in liberty of speech, I contend for, you contend for; and therefore the Episcopalian, the Independent, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian, can say to one another, using the words in their highest and not in their lowest acceptation, Are you Dissenters? So am I. There is even here a point of union which should be encouraged and strengthened, and as often as possible developed, so that society may feel it.

Are you members of the *High Church?* So am I. I believe in a High Church with all my heart. We may have different methods of measuring height; we may not all apply the same rule; we may have different lengths, different standards; but if you ask me if I am a member of the High Church, I say "Yes, and hope evermore to be." The Church never can be too high; "Ye are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid" —high in all that is pure in doctrine, consistent in life, noble in spirit high in Scriptural testimony, high in moral courage on behalf of all that is considered to be for the elevation of down-trodden human nature, and

the vindication of divinely-revealed truths. Yes; I am a member of the High Church. Perhaps some who are members of the High Church may like a little more finery than I can exactly see with at present; they may want a good deal of artificial exhibition, the meaning of which I cannot comprehend, it is either too shallow for me, or too deep for me; but *that* is not my High Church.

In speaking about the High Church, popularly so known, we ought to make ourselves very clear on one point, and in doing so there is no occasion to violate the tender spirit of charity in which the whole of this discourse is conceived. So far as false doctrine is upheld by symbolism, symbolism is mischievous. The sacraments are perverted into temptations, and the Divine method of salvation is exchanged for a system of unholy art. Whatever tends to *materialise* the spirit of Christianity must be our offence to the Holy Ghost. It is a departure from the course along which the Divine movement has been proceeding from the very beginning, and a protest against spirituality. The place of the Holy Spirit is, indeed, usurped, and His function is forgotten in a worldly zeal for decoration and histrionic power. At this point, therefore, charity itself compels us to take our stand. Charity ceases to be charitable when it ceases to be just. Charity is not distrust of truth; it is truth spoken with gentleness. Whoever uses Protestant weapons to fight Popish battles abuses a high trust, and charity itself condemns them in tones not less severe because of the reluctance with which they are employed. Blessed are they who never wish to be higher than the truth, and who despise all the fascinations of form in comparison with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The height of my Church is found in the loftiness of my doctrine, in the elevation of my Christian sentiment, in the public vindication of Divine truth, to which I feel myself called by the Holy Ghost.

Are you members of the *Low* Church? So am I. No Church can be too low, if we rightly understand that word "low." I am sometimes afraid that the Church is going to die of respectability; I am afraid that the Church is muffling herself up in silks and satins and velvets, and is set down in easy places, and enjoying herself while the devil is doing his work almost without interruption.

If you mean by a Low Church a Church that is down, down into the ditch, and the gutter, and the cellar, that goes down to seek God's likeness where God's image can hardly be seen by reason of the overgrown animalism of human nature; if by the Low Church you mean going after that which is lost until you find it, cheering the lowest man, nourishing and educating the lowest little child; if that is what you mean by being members of a Low Church, I am also of that same Church a member.

Our Saviour's spirit compels such membership. We cannot be always on the mountain top, away from the putrid life and evil influence of society; we must go down where man is lying in his guilt and in his weakness, and raise him up, and invite him to return to his Father. That is the Low Church in which I believe, and such lowness is the true dignity; such descent is the true elevation; and if we are standing aside, and saying, "Shall we go down to them, or shall they come up to us?" we have not known the mind of Jesus Christ. I will say one word about that; it is a subject to which I revert again and again, because as the subject is always there, the answer ought often to be forthcoming. If any man who professes the name of Christ can say, "Shall I go down to these people, or shall these people come up to me?" I say, you have taken Christ's name, but you have left behind Christ's spirit. Go down? Yes, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Yes; He who bore the image of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and whilst He did that, who are *we*, with our yesterday's ancestry, with our mushroom dignity, with our hateful selfishness, that we should turn aside in cold, frosted, awful respectability, and say "Shall *we* go down?" There is only one reason why we should not go down, and that is, if we can ask such a question, because there is no lower depth to which we can descend. He who is most in Christ will be deepest in the religion of His service, and there shall be found no lowness in Christian work that is not consistent with the purest and divinest dignity.

Are you a member of the *Broad Church?* So am I. I do dislike narrow churches; I do dislike little, *little* self-enclosing, self-subsisting clubs of so-called Christian professors. I find nothing narrow in Christianity. I find Christianity the broadest system, either of religion, or of thought, or of philanthropy, that I can find in the world. If there are persons that wrap their little sectarian garments about them, and say, "We are the people of God, and there is no other people that belong to Him," then are they liars, and the truth is not in them. Little people that live in a nutshell, which they mistake for the universe, that have their own little Bethel, and their own little hymn-book, and their own little sectarian movements, and their own little heaven, I do not know anything about them, except that, having heard about them, I do not wish to prosecute inquiry further. If there are such people—no, I would not alter that grammar, and say if there *be* such people, hoping that their existence is quite contingent and future—if there be such people, they know nothing about the Divine, catholic, universal liberty of Jesus Christ's teaching. I trust that we all belong to the Broad Church, that

we hail a brother, whatsoever be the temporary name by which he is known in ecclesiastical life; and that we allow heart to speak to heart, and know something of the free intercourse of brotherly unity in Christ Jesus.

Are you *Puritans?* So am I. The Church cannot be too pure; the Church is nothing, if she is not holy. I cannot consider the word Church as involving in its highest significance every kind of moral character. I believe that strait is the road, and strait is the gate that leadeth into the inner kingdom of Jesus Christ's truth; I believe that all who profess to be members of Jesus Christ's Church should come out of the world, should separate themselves to the utmost possible extent from all evil; should touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing. I believe that the pillar of the Church is the holiness of the Church, and only as we approach God's perfectness do we realize the true idea of Christian character. Brethren, amid all our charity, let us see that we are not talking the language of sentiment only, but the language which is justified by our holiness of spirit and holiness of life. There is a charity that is uncharitable; there is a charity of which the apostle never spoke in the beautiful chapter we have just read; there is a charity that is but outward, a base simulation of the Divine, all-encompassing love which comes out of true Christian life. If we have any patience, therefore, with lax morality in the Church; if we can wink at one another's moral weakness; if we have one standard of discipline for the rich, and another for the poor; if we have a poor man's morality, and a rich man's righteousness,—then is our Church a den of thieves, and the Holy Ghost hath abandoned us to the darkness and wickedness of our own devices. The Church, I repeat, is nothing, apart from the Holy Ghost. Therefore, if by a Puritanical Church is meant a Church that is severe in its moral inquests, a Church that seeks to develope the highest idea of spiritual life, then, by the grace of God helping me, I would be a Puritan of the Puritans.

Are you a *Methodist*, or a *Presbyterian?* So am I. If by these terms you mean that there ought to be order in the Church, order that is consistent with liberty, liberty that is defined by intelligent Christian law, then am I as much a Methodist, a Presbyterian, as you are. The Church is not a mob, the Church is not a chaotic society, in which every man sets up to be the greatest man in the body, and in which there is no law but what a man may choose himself to conceive as the law. The Church of Jesus Christ is a well-ordered organization, as a building the stones of which are fitly set together. In the Christian Church there is a law of proportion, there is a divinely-appointed graduation. God sets men in the Church, every one of them as it pleaseth Him; and if we begin to set up

our notions against His revelation, or if we interpret Divine love in a spirit of selfishness, we contract the universal within the sphere of the sectarian; then are we not worthy to be found in the register of God's Church. We may have different little methods of seeking order; we may have our own peculiar and distinctive plans of working out this theory, and that. What I contend for is this: that we are at perfect liberty to have these various plans, we are at perfect liberty to have our denominationalism so defined, but that having these varieties we are still one—one in Christ, one in the Cross, one in our hope of Heaven—and being one in all these things, such differences as have now been referred to ought not for a moment to interfere with deep, constant, and useful Christian intercourse. I am free to say this, that I care but very little about the nominal unification of Christendom. There is something deeper than mere names. I believe that in the deepest sense all Christians are one, and that in the deepest sense the Church of Jesus Christ is indivisible. We are not one after the pattern of a brick wall; we are one as the rainbow is one; we are many regiments, but one army; we are many counties, but one empire; we are distinct as the waves, yet one as the sea, lonely as the stars, but one as the firmament; we are diversified as the mountains, but one as the globe. Let any attack be made upon the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and from what quarter does the reply come? It never comes from *any one quarter*. Let an heretical book be written that requires a reply, and who writes the book? The book is not written by any particular section of the Church. The Episcopalian is ready with his answer; so is the Independent; the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Wesleyan; they are, too, ready with their answers, and the answers are not many, *but one*. And I find in this instantaneous and complete reply to every attack that has yet been made upon the Christian—I find in this reply, coming not from *one* quarter, or from *two*, but from *all* quarters, a noble and sensible answer to the charge that Jesus Christ's Church is divided, and there is no cohesion amongst its atoms. Brothers, I do not care for uniformity; I do not work towards uniformity; I leave that to things that are inanimate; I work for living souls who have living faith; for individuality of character controlled by meekness of heart; for independence of conviction working under the inspiration of love. Now, shall we pledge ourselves to the spirit of these principles? I do not ask you to accept my phraseology. I have spoken with a sincere intent to bring men who are in Christ over some little difficulty that may be perhaps here and there. I have been anxious to establish a recognition of our identity of life in Jesus Christ. No one of us must claim perfection no one must get up and say about things that are of secondary impor

tance, "This is right, and that is wrong." We must, in these non-essential things, have the widest liberty. All I want to say is this, We are subjects of the same crown; we have different ways of expressing our patriotism or of developing our concern for the empire; but if an evil hand is laid upon the throne, we instantaneously, universally, through the unquenchable inspiration of love, rise to its defence, to protect it from the indignity which evil men would inflict upon it.

May the time come, yea, it will surely come, when to one another we shall say, "We are citizens now of the Heavenly Empire, saints and angels gathered from every kindred and nation and people and tongue, all little differences forgotten; we are one in our Father's house, and shall go out no more for ever."

In view of the truth thus freely yet lovingly spoken, a question might be raised as to practical issues. Can anything be done in a specific manner to show our oneness in Christ Jesus? I answer—Don't let us enlarge anything that belongs to the department of mere organization. I cannot but think that this Thursday service is itself a very impressive illustration of Christian unity. We represent nearly all denominations, yet here we know nothing of denominationalism. No man can have inferred from my preaching what form of Church government I prefer. I have ever spoken from the solemn and all-commanding elevation of the Cross, not in the provincial accent of sectarianism, but in the universal language of humanity. One suggestion of a practical kind has undoubtedly occurred to me; I name it now, and leave its further consideration with others. Might we not, as members of various Christian communities, meeting here from time to time, occasionally—say once a year—partake of the Lord's Supper together? In doing so, we would surrender nothing that is distinctive; we would assert the unity of believers as sinners saved by the Son of God; and meeting each other in this lofty spiritual intercourse, we should feel a tenderer charity towards one another in all the lower fellowships and co-operations of life. I do not conceal my dislike of organization except in its most rudimental forms. The Church is hampered by organization. Fellowship is marred by intricate rules. Once carry law-making beyond the point that is absolutely needful for the simplest form of society, and you endanger union by verbal controversy, and the skilful technicalist gets the mastery by the sheer force of criticism. Love must be our law; trust must be our strength; and hope must be our inspiration. Our love of one

another, as believers in Jesus Christ, should be too pure and ardent to admit of being bound by written pledges. We want no documentary evidence of love ; we want love itself, warming and brightening our whole social life. If I might presume to offer one word of advice to a particular class, I should say to MINISTERS, *Hold one another in high honour.* Criticise each other's *work* as largely and keenly as you can, but speak the noble word about the *worker:* we can do one another the most valuable service by criticism, but never by personal censoriousness. I ask no man to turn aside the edge of his weapon whilst trying the quality of my work, but I ask for that personal consideration and honour which are due to every servant for the Master's sake. We educate each other by criticism ; we strengthen each other by *love.* May the Spirit of Life keep us from the ghastly uniformity of death, and bind us in the blessed Unity of Christ's Oneness with the Father. Amen.

City Temple Notes.

1. It may be convenient to strangers to know that there is a good entrance to the chapel from Grocers' Hall Court; or, if they go through the new passage marked 8, Old Jewry, they will come immediately upon the chapel door. By taking this course they will escape the pressure at the front entrance, and be very likely to secure comfortable accommodation. There need not be any difficulty about the ingress from 8, Old Jewry; a door or two may have to be opened, but right of way has, most fortunately, been permitted by the owners of the property.

2. We have been urged to *repeat* the Service at another hour on Thursdays, so as to meet the wishes of great numbers unable to attend at twelve o'clock. We should gladly do so but for one or two reasons which appear to be weighty:—(1) There is some ground to fear that a divided interest would weaken both services; and (2) It is almost certain that divided vigour would impair the efficiency of the ministry. That twelve o'clock is a convenient hour for *many* is proved by the congregations already in attendance. We shall be only too glad to consider any feasible plan for meeting the wishes of men whose time is not at their own disposal. We await suggestions.

3. In answer to many friendly inquiries, it occurs to us to say that we have much reason to be encouraged in our work. We labour under no little disadvantage in consequence of the peculiar construction of the Poultry Chapel; both the principal entrances are on the same side, and when they are blocked up by waiting strangers two difficulties arise:—(1.) The stated seat-holders find it almost impossible to get to their seats; and (2.) Visitors who come later turn back, under the impression that the chapel is crowded. Great inconvenience would be prevented, and much time saved, if the information given in our first note could be remembered and acted upon. As to the work itself, there is but one thing wanted to complete our assurance that God is with us; without that one thing no ministry can be world-wide in its range, or long-enduring in influence—that one thing is *persecution*. We have been waiting for this. We must be wrong somewhere, or it would have come before now. We cannot have spoken of evil with sufficient emphasis, else the devil would have tried to spoil our work. It is not enough to have heard of an odd man here and there who has tried to sneer; that is nothing; when fierce, bitter, malignant abuse is lavishly accorded to a minister, he may believe that he has struck in the right place with the right weapon. All history seems to bear out the statement that abuse is necessary to the fullest success in preaching the gospel. Whether we look to Jesus Christ himself, to His most renowned disciples and apostles, or to the men who have left names that will be prized through all generations, it is invariably true that they have had to suffer the scourge of evil tongues. Not only so, their lot was harder still; their friends did not believe in them; their brethren withheld from them confidence and honour; and oftentimes they were left in loneliness and poverty. In view of such history, we may see how far we fall short of being in the succession of Jesus Christ's mightiest men.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, November 18th, 1869.

After singing the hymn commencing "Come, let us join our cheerful songs," the following passages of Scripture were repeated :—

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"The kingdom of God is within you."

"The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

The Prayer.

Blessed Saviour, Thy kingdom come! Set up Thy throne in our hearts, and cause all we are and all we have to fall down before Thee in the loyalty of perfect love. Too long have we been our own gods and kings, but now we come with tears and hope to Thee, that Thou mayest be our Lord from this day, time without end. Thou wast slain for us; Thou didst bear our sins in Thine own body on the tree. Now we would give Thee exaltation; we would hail Thee as our Prince; we would serve Thee as our Master; we would love Thee for all Thy work. O Lamb of God! O Chosen of the Father! dwell with us; help us to grow in Thy grace and Thy knowledge, and to show forth amongst men the mystery and power of Thy kingdom. O Thou who givest eternal life, speak to us, then shall we never die. Amen.

The Sermon.

NOT IN WORD, BUT IN POWER.

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."—1 Cor. iv. 20.

In the Corinthian Church, that riotous school in which every scholar set himself up as a master, there were some persons who, being exceedingly puffed up with their own importance, always had a good deal to say, and they said it with that boldness and inflation of manner which is taken by some people as the sign of Divine authority. They were evidently prodigious talkers, like men in our own day, living under the modest impression that when they die wisdom will perish out of the land; men who say all they know, yet do not always know all they say; men without ideas, without convictions, and without anything but immeasurable emptiness and infinite capacity for making a noise. Utterly unfit to grasp any great subject in its unity, they see some little shadows of it here and there, and mistaking the part for the whole, they make a noisy claim for self-inspiration and consequent infallibility. All great talkers of little talk are dangerous, not because of their power, but because of their weakness. The tongue of conceit is a cruel master. It talks itself into madness. It likes to hear its own patter even at the expense of the comfort of all whom it frets and chafes into a resentment which cannot be dignified by reason of the contemptibleness of the object which has excited it. In the Corinthian Church there were some puffed-up talkers making themselves very large in the Apostle's absence, probably setting forth new doctrines, or endeavouring by such secrecy and circumvention as are possible to evil genius to upset the authority of the inspired teachers; they were clamorous and urgent talkers,

never giving anybody a chance of reply—most unaccountably wise men, knowing everything and a little more, and saying it as if they had received privileged communications from Heaven. They made a good deal of the Apostle's absence, apparently giving broad hints that the Apostle would never show his face in Corinth, or that if he did, he would be met by severe criticism, or perhaps by claims to an authority equal to his own. Paul, however, was never kept back by a puff of wind; there might be lions in his way, but he had a happy plan of never looking at them, or passing them with a self-possession which utterly confounded and paralyzed the dangerous beasts. He told the Corinthians that he would visit them shortly, and that he would judge, not the speech, but the power of the puffed-up talkers, and then he laid down this sublime doctrine: "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." The kingdom of God is not a wordy controversy, but a quickening spirit; the kingdom of God is not a clever debate, a feat in logic, a conundrum in metaphysics, but a life, a reality, the mightiest and most beneficent of powers. Whether the kingdom of God is in any man depends, not upon what he *says*, but upon what *he is*; not upon his professions, but upon his actions; not upon his skill in words, but upon his life in God and his rank in the spiritual universe.

It may be well to point out that the kingdom of God *has* a word peculiarly its own; it is not a mere impression upon the mind, secret and inarticulate; it has a distinct testimony of its own—outward, audible, positive demonstrations. But they are not mere words or signs; they are full of life, bright with Divine glory, sacred with the presence and energy of the Holy Ghost. Some men's words cost them nothing; other men's words are spirit and life; God's word is as near being God himself as it is possible for the speech to be the speaker. I pause to say this, because there is some danger of religion becoming to some minds only a beautiful dream, or a mystic contemplation—an afflatus, odorous and refreshing to the secret heart, but having no message to the world, no authoritative law to society. We claim for the kingdom of God positive dogmas, a visible embodiment, and an ethical legislation; dogma, sign, and statute, however, being nothing, except as God breathes into them the power of His own eternity. I wish to gather up a few practical lessons which are taught or illustrated by the statement that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Look at the subject *in relation to individual Christian life.* It is one thing to feel the power of God in the soul, and another to be able to vindicate doctrines and to establish a great visible outwork of service. Men cannot always do themselves justice in speech; yet, where there are few words, there may be true power. On the other hand, men may have great facility in speech, yet their hearts may be put partially under Divine dominion. A man should himself always be greater than his words. However eloquent his speech, his life should be deeper, broader, diviner, than any words can ever reveal. It is possible, too, that from the poorest words there may be poured an irresistible, all-convincing, and all-blessing life, as from the bush in Horeb there flamed a glory not of earth, and from the raiment of the transfigured Nazarene there shone a brightness more splendid than the fire of the sun. The Apostle gives us some such idea of his own preaching when he says, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." Again: "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Our words are not accepted *because* they are poor; but in so far as they come from the heart, and express the life that we enjoy in Christ, the Holy Ghost will invest them with power, and the little one shall prevail against the great army. Let every man, therefore, who undertakes to extend the word of the Divine kingdom feel himself called upon to do his best, however poor that may be. No teacher of the Gospel is warranted in being indolent, and in defending his indolence by the plea that the kingdom of God does not depend upon his word, but upon its own power. We are to do the best for that kingdom which it is within the compass of our ability to render, as if everything depended upon our personal energy; and having done so, though the result may be, in the estimation of the world, weak, and even contemptible, yet it is in such weakness that God magnifies His own strength. Paul said to the Galatians, "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at first;" yet to them he said also, "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." There was a power in the truth to work out its own result apart from the defect and weakness of the spirit. We should be taught, too, by this reference to personal infirmity, that we are not to find in such infirmity an excuse for not attempting to serve the kingdom of God. It ought to be enough

for us to know that God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty ; He calls us into His service, not that He needs our power to help, but that He may, by engaging us in His lofty work, train us to a higher nobleness and strength of soul.

The point on which I wish to insist is this. The power of the heavenly kingdom may be the supreme sovereignty of a man's heart, and yet he may not have much skill in the use of words ; his argument may be ill-constructed, and his controversial weapons may be turned on himself with mortal effect by some skilled and heartless controversialist, who, seeing the ruin he has wreaked upon the Christian argument, may laugh the Christian advocate to scorn; yet in the heart of the Christian advocate there is the dominion of Divine love, and in his life there is a sanctity which comes only of deep and long-continued intercourse with the Holy Ghost.

A man is not to be judged by the poverty of his words, but by the moral power of his life. The simplicity of his motives, the nobleness of his temper, the purity of his conversation, his forbearance, gentleness, catholicity, self-denial, *these* are the convincing signs that in his heart are set the pillars of God's throne. On the other hand, there may be splendid genius, exquisite skill in debate, language the most chaste and powerful, wit that wins a battle with a sentence, sarcasm that clears its way with a tongue of fire, and yet there may be no grace in the heart, the soul may not know the voice of God, the life may not respond to the power of truth ; there will be simply genius without grace—that is, a lamp in a graveyard, or a crown on the brow of the dead !

Look at the subject *in its bearing upon Church organizations or individual methods of Christian service.* I suppose that we cannot altogether escape some degree of officialism in our religious life, yet it is to be feared that societyism is not always kept within the limits of our spirituality. Were the Apostle to visit us, and be shown our elaborate machinery constructed for the evangelization of the world—were he to spend the month of May in London, and add to his many afflictions the burden of hearing all the papers, resolutions, and speeches with which that loquacious month abounds—he would probably take occasion to repeat the doctrine of the text, "The kingdom of God is with power." I do not think he would care much for our speeches. The one thing for which he would care most is the one thing for which many people care

least, namely, the Report of work done and results secured. He would certainly look at the *power* rather than at the rhetoric; and whilst the crowds might be cheering rapturously, his heart might feel the stings of despondency. Imagine the Apostle Paul as a member of an assembly in Exeter Hall! As the first speaker rose, and began to compliment the chairman, setting forth how great honour the chairman was conferring upon the cause by his presidency, how the apostle would instantly interrupt him, saying, "Sir, let us not hear such words as these! This is not Cæsar's cause, but God's. A greater than Cæsar is here; let all your references be to Him. No man, however great his social position, whatsoever the name by which he is known amongst men, can confer the slightest honour on the Christian cause. Do you, therefore, forgetting all your references to Lord Mayors, High Sheriffs, and other dignities, proceed to the work of expounding the true nature of God's kingdom." What an effect would be produced by such an interruption as this!—and yet how just would be the interruption! The Apostle Paul would probably be pronounced out of order; he might even be conducted to the door by ungentle hands; but even if he were so treated, he would turn round, and exclaim again, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power!" May the Church be forgiven her many sins of speech-making! Her *word* has been loud as thunder,—but with what similitude shall we set forth her power? We cannot have too much *preaching* of the right kind. Divine truth is Divine power. Open every pulpit in the month of Church festivals, and let the Gospel be declared in many ways, by many minds; we cannot have too much exposition of Divine truth, or too much enforcement of Divine appeals; but save us from the pious frivolity, the complimentary lying, the courteous hypocrisy, and the ambitious ladder-climbing of a degenerate platform!

I do not hesitate to suggest that we are in danger of setting up far too much machinery. The *Church* should be the one great organization; the Church is the missionary society, the tract society, the sick visiting society—now and again, indeed, it may be useful to combine, and co-operation, if genuine, will bring with it many benefits; but in all our relations, schemes, and enterprises, let us aim at the *power*, rather than at the word. Let me be most clearly understood upon this point. I camnot arguing for the destruction of machinery, but for the exercise of

great care, lest we be maintaining a great system of organization, when the spirit is no longer present. We cannot fight the devil with an army of mere Secretaries; we cannot put him down by writing on foolscap from one May to another. Our Secretaries must be supported by the hearty co-operation of all who sympathise with the object which they are appointed more particularly to represent; our foolscap must be written not only with ink, but, as it were, with the very blood of the heart. Do not let us keep up any society merely for the sake of doing so. If a society has exhausted itself, say so; break it up, and go forward to new methods. We must not encumber ourselves with dead institutions. Power must be the test of organization. Never waste power. Never undervalue power. But when the power has gone, do not, *do not* let us keep up the mocking repetition of the useless *word*. It is perfectly clear to any man who takes a sober survey of Christendom, that there are societies that are doing a great and mighty work—societies without which Christendom would lose much of its glory. We cannot too zealously or liberally support such societies. My remarks in no wise relate to them; but I do not hesitate to pronounce a most emphatic denunciatory sentence upon societies which have the form only, which exist merely for the purpose of promoting selfish ends, without attempting the extension of great principles. On this matter Christians must judge for themselves. No man ought to feel himself at liberty to write out a list of the societies which alone ought to be supported; we must sit in judgment upon each particular case. All that I insist upon is this, that no society ought to be supported except in so far as it really embodies and expresses the power of the Divine kingdom. It is possible to have much organization and little spirit. It is possible to have many officers, and yet not to be carrying the war into the camp of the enemy. We do not want a decorated Christianity; all that is wanted is intelligence, sincerity, self-sacrifice, and the other signs of Christian power with which the kingdom of God ought evermore to be accompanied.

Look at the subject *in its relation to religious controversy*, taking the term controversy in its widest meaning. In this relation it behoves Christian teachers to remember with special care that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. For my own part, I am growingly indisposed to a war of words; little, if any good comes of mere controversy.

Let us, working in the spirit of Jesus Christ, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and health to the diseased, and let these works be our answer to the challenge of the scoffer and the laughter of the fool. Constantly we must have exposition of great principles, occcasionally we must have defence, but the business of our lives is to show forth the mighty and wonderful works of God. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. I care but little for mere debate. It may be well to *argue* for the soundness of the voluntary principle; it is better to erect a sanctuary, or to do some other work which gives visible embodiment to that principle. It may be well to answer an atheist; it is better to confound him by living a trustful life in God—to say, amidst all the discipline of life, even when it is most terrible and overwhelming, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It may be of service to contend for the inspiration of the Scriptures; it is infinitely better to send the Bible into all the world to speak for itself, for if it cannot vindicate its own claim to inspiration by speaking livingly to the human heart in its deepest experiences and most crying necessities, then our little treatises upon the evidences of inspiration will do it but slender service. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." We have a great positive work to do; God has given us a revelation, and we must not treat it as a theory which human ingenuity can either overthrow or amend. A living man is the best answer to those who rail against Christianity. Do not let us think it necessary to defend every point in our faith by elaborate preparation in words. Let us go on the Master's business, and in our Master's spirit carry light into the places of darkness, lifting up those that have no helper, giving men to *feel* that there is a Divine spirit in us; and in doing this we shall answer all controversy and objection by the beneficence of life, and by well-doing we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. In speaking thus generally, I do not overlook the special controversial gifts of exceptional men. I should not bury such gifts. By all means let them be used. They may render great service; and, indeed, that they have done so already is made clear by many proofs. I am speaking generally of the vocation of the Church, and that is undoubtedly a call, not merely to the argument of the letter, but to the exhibition of heavenly graces in our common daily life. If any man in this assembly is conscious of a call to maintain the Christian kingdom by direct controversy, and if he has

had Divine seals to his ministry, then by all means let him prosecute his vocation, and may the blessing of God rest upon him. At the same time I feel myself at liberty to say to the young, There is a great temptation to you to consume your time in the strife of words, to debate with every objector, to give reasons and defences where older and wiser men than yourselves have been silenced; my advice to you is, to covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet, even counting controversy amongst those gifts, I venture to say that I can show unto you a more excellent way. Be pure in your motives; be simple in all your intercourse with society; be noble in your temper; be magnanimous in your patience, with long-suffering and forgiveness of injuries; and by these weapons you will be able to fight a great battle for the Lord. I do not forbid inquiry into the foundations of the faith; I rather urge young Christian inquirers to be able to give a reason for the faith and the hope that are in them; yet let them be put on their guard, lest by the craftiness of longheaded men who care nothing for Divine proof, they be lured from the right way, and be confounded by words without inquiring for the power. Let me further say that even controversy itself is dependent for its highest benefit upon the power which Christianity exercises in the heart. You may be able to answer a man, and yet not to convince him; you may silence him in words, and yet leave the desire of his heart untouched; but if you bring with you, not only skill in language, but all that is divinely beautiful in Christian life, and all that is persuasive in Christian temper, all that is devout and tender in human spirit, you will be able more effectually to prosecute the great task to which you have set yourselves.

Looking, then, at the whole subject as it has thus been briefly opened up, let me once more say to the individual Christian, It is quite possible for you to have in your heart the power of the Divine government without your being able to set up an elaborate defence of the Christian faith. You can feel where you cannot speak. You can impress by nobility of action where you could never influence by skill in statement. Do not be discouraged because you feel yourself of little service in the matter of speaking concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ. I do not know but that speaking about Christ's kingdom is the lowest service which can be rendered to it. At any rate, whatever may be said about this, it is perfectly clear to my own mind that speech, unaccompanied by

the testimony of a noble life, is an unacceptable offering to Him whom it is professedly employed to serve.

Let me say to those who take an interest in Church organization, that it is perfectly possible to have elaborate machinery and yet not to have the spirit of the living God. Do not let us measure our Christian progress merely by the number of societies which we support. When we reckon up our triumphs for the Cross, do not let us speak merely of such values and compensations as may be passable in the market-places of the world. Let us go further, and make searching inquiry into the moral power which we are exercising upon society. If evil men fear the presence of the Church; if those who curtain themselves under darkness, that they may conceal their works of iniquity from the world, feel that when Christian men draw near to them shafts of light are striking their covering of gloom; if the world be conscious that there is within it, and yet above it, a spirit of self-sacrifice and heavenly wisdom which it cannot account for on any ordinary principles,—then we may be sure that we have not only the word, but the power of the Divine kingdom of God. I would call the Church to the exercise of its fullest might. I would not silence one man who knows how to speak the true word in a true manner; on the contrary, I would encourage all who have the gift of eloquence to make themselves heard in the Christian cause, always remembering that the word must come out of the heart, and that the heart itself must feel desires, impulses, and movements, which it is utterly impossible to reveal in the choicest human language.

To the controversialist the subject says, Remember that controversy is nothing considered merely in itself! What is the voice of your heart? Do men feel that in your life there is a hidden principle which is more than earthly? When you have confounded them by the brilliance of an argument, do you also lift them up by the gentleness of your life? Do men fear you as a mere debater, or do they come to you as to one who has wise words, and who will speak them with all sharpness and emphasis, and yet with all sympathy and love? Remember, that not everyone that saith "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of God. This is the great, this is the final test; whosoever doeth the will, however few and poor be his words, on his head shall be set the crown of life.

The sun shall teach me the meaning of this wonderful passage. The

sun says nothing whilst doing his great work. He is silent, yet mighty; mighty, yet silent. There is no controversy proceeding between the sun and the stars as to the meaning of *summer*. The sun is not giving pictures of what summer is or of what summer might be made; he is not disputing with the other worlds which of them can make the most beautiful summer; there is no war of words in the chambers of the stars; the sun pours down his blessings on the earth, covers the world with manifold beauty, and having caused the summer to pour all its riches upon the face of the earth, he leaves men to form their own conclusions as to his might. I would be, in my measure, as is the sun. We can do much, though we say but little. It ought to be with us a question of intense and penetrating light, and not a question of debate and controversy or contention for eminence. As the sun is always working, always blessing the earth with an abundance of light, so should we, in our Christian lives, be endeavouring to bring day and beauty and fruitfulness into the society in which we move. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.

City Temple Notes.

1. There is one most Christlike work to which I wish to devote myself with constant zeal, and that is *the recovery of fallen men.* I am pained inexpressibly by much that I see in the so-called discipline of churches. A man, a minister, perhaps, falls, what then? He is given over to social damnation—turned out, and hardly a man in all the church has enough of Christ's spirit to go after him, and show him the way back again. So many of us are only moral enough to be able to criticise the morality of other people. It is right to exclude, but is the excluded man never to be sought for, and to be recovered, if possible, to his lost position? How few of us *dare* openly identify ourselves with the fallen man, and boldly say that we do so for *Christ's sake*, and in *Christ's spirit!* From all fallen men I must insist upon the fullest and most penitent *confession of sin;* there must not be the faintest attempt at self-justification—there must be abasement, sorrow, poignant self-reproach—there must also be the most painstaking endeavour in the direction of restitution, where restitution is possible; and where those indispensable conditions are forthcoming, I would work for the sorrowing sinner with joy and thankfulness. If this note should come under the attention of any man who has lost Christian status, I beseech him to *own his sin*, and to stand before the world as a penitent; no excuses, or recriminations, can be tolerated, in reference to *sin:* say you have sinned; tell the black tale, however revolting it may be; force yourself to tell the whole story of your shame; and if you bring forth fruits meet for repentance, God himself will go before you, and all your way shall be made plain. Self-vindication excludes all help. Where a man says that he has been unjustly accused, he takes his case into his own hands; but where he says, I have sinned, I have dishonoured the Saviour's name, I pray God and society to forgive me and restore me, he puts himself within the conditions which make salvation possible.

2. As it is hardly possible to answer all the letters of advice, encouragement, and thankfulness, which friends send almost daily, it may serve a good object if we assure correspondents that their letters are carefully read, and much appreciated. All *anonymous* letters, however, are instantly put into the fire; it is, therefore, a pity for any one who has a true word to say, to waste time, paper, and postage, over statements which are never read. Many a time we have put "A Well-wisher" into the fire, and seen "A Constant Hearer" perish in ashes. All who give their names and addresses may be assured of most respectful attention—all others may be sure of the instant destruction of their most careful compositions. Special thanks are due to one friend in Leeds, who tells us that he has obtained something like sixty subscribers to the *City Temple.* He is a truly wise ally, having ordered the copies of *four* different booksellers, so as to spread an interest in the publication. Love has a happy knack of doing things in the best way. Such a helper in every town would soon turn the *City Temple* into a *National Sanctuary.*

3. We have been urged to attempt something in the way of organizing and educating lay agents. We like the idea very much, and are disposed to look at it practically. If a hundred occasional preachers would read and think according to a plan which could easily be devised, very important results would be secured in course of time. We now invite correspondence on the matter. No man need write who is unwilling to submit to hard drill. We do not contemplate anything in the way of intellectual amusement—our watchword is *discipline.*

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, November 25th, 1869.

After singing the hymn commencing "When I can read my title clear," the following passages of Scripture were repeated :—

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

"Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

"Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names."

"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

The Prayer.

Great God, save us from the laughter of Thy scorning! Who can stand before Thy derision? When Thou dost pour contempt upon the children of men, the works of their hands fade away; the great towers which they build crumble into dust, and they themselves have no desire but to be laid in the grave. We have sought to do without Thee in the building of our life and our fortune, and lo! we have been baffled and defied by unseen ministrants of Thine. Thy works have smitten us with shame, and our hearts have been filled with self-contempt. Teach us that Thou hast laid the only foundation on which man can safely build; say to us again and again in our folly, "Other foundation can

no man lay." Teach us to build thereon as those that must give an account, knowing that our work shall be tried by the floods and the fires of Thy judgment. Help us to work from the Cross of the Saviour as from the one true centre ; and encourage us to believe that Thou wilt not cast us off whilst we are faithful to the spirit of Thy law. If any man before Thee is building upon his own foundation, teach him that his work shall be overthrown ; and if any persons be discouraged from building upon the right foundation, do Thou give them strength by Thy Holy Spirit. Help us to listen with all attention. May our hearts be alive to Thy Word ; may our soul cry out to the living God ; and may the experience of Thy people be sweet and joyful even to luxury and triumph, that they, knowing that Thou art with them, may build on until the time of putting on the top-stone. Destroy all disposition to build earthly resting-places ; help us to feel that this is not our rest, and that only mansions of Thine own building are worthy of our renewed and sanctified nature. Keep us from godless self-reliance. Teach us that our own power is utter weakness. Save us from self-idolatry, and from the vain imaginings of self-sufficient conceit. Plague us and smite us until we cease the service of the devil, and give us sweet enjoyment of Thy presence in all the endeavours we make after higher life. God bless us, pity our littlenesses, and visit us in all the fulness and tenderness of His pardoning love ! So great a prayer we dare breathe in the name of the Omnipotent and Gracious Saviour. Amen

The Sermon.

ON THE BUILDING OF BABEL.

I WISH to dwell upon some features of our practical life which seem to receive vivid illustration from the account which is given in the opening of the eleventh chapter of the Book of Genesis of the building of the city and tower of Babel. Comparing that account with our own method of life and art, it is clear that from the beginning of time men have been doing pretty much the same thing all the world over. The world's story is but short; it is very much like a series of repetitions: the actors, indeed, have been innumerable, but the drama has always been contracted, and seldom profound. The actors have made noise enough, but when there has been a little break through the dust, we have observed that they have not always made equal progress. We have a short Bible, because we have a short life. We have a fragmentary Bible, because we have a fragmentary human story. We have a Bible that apparently contradicts itself, because we have a life full of discrepancies —because part of us is Divine and part of us earthly—because we have many chipped links, many unmatched and unmatchable patterns, which no skill can put into anything like decent unity. The world, too, is but a little world. Men jump together again and again as if they could not escape one another's presence, and as for thinking, strife of mind, intellectual projections and conceptions, originalities there are none; *variations* many, but no *originalities*. We are still in the land of Shinar, plotting with one another, burning bricks, building cities and towers, and being thrown from depth to depth of confusion. We are shut up in a very small prison, and can see but little through the narrow grating of our separate cells. What can we do, then? What is our calling? It is to try to alter the *moral tone* of our work; we must burn bricks, build cities, and erect towers in *the right spirit;* and we must try to get to heaven, not as the builders of Babel did. If we get to heaven at all, it will never be through the dark and ricketty staircases

of our own invention. Let us, then, read the story of Babel together, and gather from it what we may.

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."

Unanimity is nothing, considered strictly in itself. It is of no value that we say, in excuse of this or that deed, "It was done unanimously." Men may do wrong things unanimously, as well as things that are right. We must distinguish between union and conspiracy; we must distinguish between identity and mere association for a given object. Twelve directors may be of one language and of one speech, but the meaning of their unity may be self-enrichment, at the expense of unsuspecting men, who have put their little all into their keeping and direction. It is nothing, therefore, to talk about unanimity in itself considered. We must,, in all these things, put the moral question, "What is the unanimity about?"—"Is this unanimity moving in the right direction?" If it be in a wrong direction, then unanimity is an aggravation of sin; if it be in a right direction, then union is power, and one-heartedness is triumph. But it is possible that unanimity may be but another word for stagnation. There are words in our language which are greatly misunderstood—and unanimity is one of them; peace is another. When many persons say peace, what do they mean? A living, intelligent, active co-operation, where there is mutual concession, where there is courtesy on every hand, where there is independent conviction, and yet noble concert in life? Not at all. They say that a church is unanimous, and a church is at peace, when a correct interpreter would say it was the unanimity of the grave, the peace of death! So I put in a word here of caution and of explanation: "The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech;" here is a point of unanimity, and yet there is a *unanimous movement in a wrong direction.*

"And they said one to another, go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly; . . . . and they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven."

There are times in life when lucky ideas strike men; when there is a kind of intellectual spring-tide in the nature, when men rise and say, "I have got it! go to, this is it!" And in the bright hours when such ideas strike one, the temptation is to be a little contemptuous in reference to dull men who are never visited by conceptions, so bright and original as we deem them. A man has been in great perplexity, month after month, and suddenly he says, "Go to, the solution is now before me, I see my way right out of this dark place;" and he heightens his tone, as the joy swells in his heart. That is right. We could not do without intellectual birthdays; we could not always be carrying about a dead leaden

brain, that never sees light or shouts victory. We like these moments of inspiration to break in upon the dull monotony of such a lifetime as ours. So it is perfectly right that men should express their new conceptions—their new programme—and lay out a bold policy in a clear and confident tone. But are all our ideas so very bright? When we see our way to brickmaking, is it always in the right direction? When we set our mind upon founding a city and building a tower the top of which shall rest against the stars, *is it right?* You see that question of "right" comes in again and again, and in proportion as a man wishes to live a true Divine life he will always say, before going to his brickmaking and his city-founding and his tower-building, "Now, *is this right?*" Many of us could have built great towers, only we knew we should be building downwards if we had set our hands to such work as has often tempted us. Do not let us look coldly upon apparently unsuccessful men, and say, *Look at us; we* have built a great city and tower, and *you*, where are you?—stretching in the dust and grovelling in nothing." They could have built quite as large a tower as ours; they could have been quite as far up in the clouds as we are, only we had perhaps less conscience than they had. When we saw a way to burning bricks, we *burned* them; and a way to establishing towers, we founded them; and they, poor creatures, unsuccessful men, began to *pray* about it and to wonder if it was right, and to ask casuistical questions, and to rack themselves upon conscience; and so they have done no building! And yet they *may* have built. Who can tell? All buildings are not made of brick; all men do not require to lay out brickfields, and burn clay, in order to build. It may be found one day, when the final inspection takes place, that the man who has built nothing *visible* has really built a palace for the residence of God. It may be found, too, that some successful people have nothing but bricks—nothing but bricks, bricks, bricks! Then it will be seen who the true builders are. What I pause here to say is this: We may have bright ideas, we may have (to us) new conceptions; there are, to our thinking, original ways of doing things; now and again cunning plans of overcoming difficulties strike us. Do I condemn this intellectual activity? No; I simply say, Let your *intellect* and your *conscience* go together; do not be onesided men; do not be living altogether out of the head, be living out of your moral nature as well; and if it be right, then build the tower with all industry and determination. Let it be strong and lofty, and God shall come down upon your work and glorify it, and claim it as His own.

"A tower whose top may reach even unto heaven."

Bold men,—men of vigorous mind, striking out something that is very

definite, and about which there could be no mistake. We, too, are doing just what they did; we are following the god *Ambition*—the restless god, Ambition, who never sleeps, never pauses, never gives his devotees vacation, but is always stirring them up to more and more furious desires. Do I condemn ambition?—nothing of the kind. I praise ambition; I say to every young man who may to-day accept me as his teacher, Be ambitious; build loftily; let your aspirations be confined only by the limits which God himself has set to human power and human capability; *but,—but,*—that old question comes in again, Is it right? *Is it right?* Our ambitions may be our temptations; our ambitions may be stumbling-blocks over which we fall into outer darkness; our ambitions may be the cups out of which we drink some deadly intoxicant, poisoning the mind and destroying the heart's life. Therefore, I pause again to ask, *Is it right?* Then, too, we pronounce some men ambitious, who are really not ambitious. All men do not understand the word ambition—ambition has been vulgarized, taken out altogether from its refined and beautiful associations, and debased into something that is intensely of the earth, earthy. I call men to *intellectual* ambition, to *spiritual* ambition; to the ambition that says, "I count not myself to have attained; this one thing I do I *press*." Alas! there are ten thousand men in our city streets to-day who are "pressing;" but the question is, "Towards *what* do they press?" The apostle says, "I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That is better than saying, "Let us build a tower whose top shall reach even unto heaven;" and yet it is true tower-building—it is palace-building. Men who look at things only by their senses, who value things only according to their market prices, may say, "These are castles in the air;" but I have a strong conviction that these castles in the air are in many cases the only true and enduring castles. We cannot *see* them, but what do we *see* anywhere but the shell of things, or the little pedestal—the great universe is beyond the veil; the great splendours are hidden from us; the great realities are things *not seen.* Do not let us, then, look from our lofty scaffolding down upon praying people, and thinking people, and spiritual people, and say they are not building. Our scaffolding is a long way up. Take care lest the winds catch it and spare not! Take care lest our elevation become our destruction!

"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded."

You believe in inspection, do you not? You say that inspection is of little worth except it be conducted by competent power and with

strict impartiality of spirit; and you are right in so thinking. In the case before us, Almighty God himself came down to see what the children of men were doing, and when He comes down (a phrase which is used to accommodate Himself to our methods of expression), nothing can escape the penetration of His eye. He looks at our day-books, ledgers, and other memorandum books, to see how we are building the tower of our life; He visits our country residences and palatial buildings for the purpose of trying their foundations; He looks into all the building of our fortune, that He may see whether our gains have been honestly secured. Terrible is the day for the bad man on which Almighty God lays His great hand—the hand in which the winds are hidden, the great palm in which all the stars of the heaven are gathered—upon the tower which is being built; He will shake it, and, if the foundation is bad, the whole superstructure will be thrown down to the dust! In passing through our city streets I observe that the windows of many mercantile houses are left without defence, except huge iron bars; and it is easy to see that merchantmen have left their letters and papers upon their desks that they might return to them on the following day and continue their business. Their places are vacant and silent, yet there is in them nothing less than the presence of God himself; and the Eye of Omniscience is passing over page after page and book after book, and God is noting the whole process and tendency of men's lives. When men build their towers under the conviction that every stone of them will be tried by Divine power—when they build their cities, and erect their towers, and extend their properties, under the assurance that not one thing of all the things that their hands are doing will escape the test of God's Spirit—we may expect life to be built upon a true foundation, and according to a righteous plan. What we have to ponder is this most certain fact, that God will come down to see our work, and that there is no possibility of concealing from Him any incorrectness of plan or any deficiency of service. For many a long day we may imagine ourselves secure from the supervision of Omnipotence; but such imagination is an utter mistake, for there is nothing in our life that is not naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Our little works and our great works alike ought to be conducted with an eye to Divine judgment. The work that is internal, as well as the work that is external, should be conducted with that holy desire to do what is right, which alone is the guarantee that we are not living atheistic lives.

"Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.'

Here we are brought face to face with the great question of the

discipline of human imagination. Life that is lived entirely in the imagination is lived wastefully. We are not to condemn imagination, for most truly imagination is a Divine gift; but it is a gift which is seldom, if ever, to be exercised alone. Our imagination must take counsel of our judgment, and our judgment must act in co-operation with our heart, so that there may be unanimity in all our faculties in carrying out the great projects of life. It is a terrible thing for any man to be given over to the unrestrained dominion of his fancy. Our imagination becomes intoxicated, and we are the victims of dreamings which may lead us into the wildest excesses, causing us to overlook all social claims and all Divine obligations, and to work only for our own aggrandisement and strength. Imagination never thinks; it only dreams. Imagination never reasons; it flies away, not knowing whither it is going. Imagination is never sober; it is always intoxicated with burning desire. I might challenge some of you to-day, to tell me whether you are not living lives of riotous imagination; dreaming of new plans of securing wealth, of novel projects for the defrauding of unsuspecting men, and whether in this awful excitement you are not forgetting the common duties of life. Men cannot always live upon the wings of their imagination; they must stand still, pause, think, reason, pray, and then, if their imagination can assist them to overcome difficulties, they are at liberty to follow all the will of their fancy. Let us take our starting-point from simple truth; let us hold deep and solemn consultation with the Spirit of Righteousness; let us know that our greatest power is little more than weakness; and then we shall walk without stumbling; and though our tower be not built very loftily, it will be built with a stability which God himself will never allow to be shaken.

"Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

This brings before us a hint of the unknown resources of God, in the matter of punishing those who disobey His will. Who could have thought of this method of scattering the builders of the city? God does not send a fire upon the builders; no terrible plague poisons the air; yet in an instant each workman is at a loss to understand the other, and each considers all the others as but raving maniacs! Imagine the bewildering and painful scene! Men who have been working by each other's side, days and weeks, are instantly conscious of inability to understand one another's speech! New sounds, new accents, new words, but not a ray of intelligence in all! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." God has innumerable ways of showing His

displeasure of human folly and human crime. A man may be pursuing a course of prosperity, in which he is ignoring all that is moral and Divine, and men may be regarding him as the very model of success, yet in an instant Almighty God may blow upon his brain, and the unsuccessful man may sit down in a defeat which can never be reversed. God is not confined to one method of punishment. He touches a man's bones, and they melt; He breathes upon a man's brain, and henceforth he is not able to think. He comes in at night-time, and shakes the foundations of man's most trusted towers, and in the morning there is nought but a heap of ruins. He disorganises men's memories, and in an instant they confuse all the recollections of their lifetime. He touches man's tongue, and the fluent speaker becomes a stammerer. He breaks the staff in twain, and he who was relying upon it is thrown down in utter helplessness. We know but little of what God means when He says, "Heaven;" that word gives us but a dim hint of the infinite light and blessedness and triumph which are in reserve for the good. We have but a poor conception of what God means when He says, "Hell;" that word is but a flickering spark compared with the infinite distress, the endless ruin and torment which must befall every man who defies his Maker.

Speaking of this confusion of language, may I not be permitted to inquire whether even in our own English tongue there is not to-day very serious confusion? Do men really mean words to be accepted in their plain common-sense? Does not the acute man often tell his untrained client what he intends to do in language which has double meanings? Do we not sometimes utter the words that have one meaning to the world and another meaning to our own hearts? Yea does not always mean yea, nor does nay always mean nay; men sign papers with mental reservations; men utter words in their common meaning, and to themselves they interpret these words with secret significations. The same words do not mean the same thing under all circumstances, and as spoken by different speakers. When a poor man says "rich," he means one thing; when a millionaire says "rich," he means something very different. Let us consider that there is morality even in the use of language. Let no man consider himself at liberty to trifle with the meaning of words. Language is the medium of intercourse between man and man, and on the interpretation of words great results depend. It behoves us, therefore, who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, so to speak as to leave ourselves without the painful reflection of having taken refuge in ambiguous expressions for the sake of saving ourselves from unpleasant results. It will be a sign that God is really with us as a nation, when a pure language is restored unto us—when

man can trust the word of man, and depend with entire confidence upon the honour of his neighbour.

What shall we carry away from this meditation? Man must work, but he may work in a wrong spirit and with a wrong intent. We may do the right thing in a wrong way. What we have to beware of is *atheistic* building! "He builds too low who builds beneath the skies." There is one message which I have to deliver to all who hear me this day, namely, We have not to lay the *foundation*. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." The word of warning to every man is this, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." A building may be noble in design, ample in magnitude, commodious and convenient in all its appointments, but the one great question relates to the foundation! Of what value is it that we build loftily and broadly, with an eye to all that is beautiful in proportion and satisfactory in arrangement, if all the while we be building upon the sand? The fires will come, or the floods will descend, or the great winds will conspire to try our work, and though our work itself suffer loss, we shall be saved if we be resting upon a right foundation which God himself has laid. I have spoken this morning of ambition. I have not dissuaded young men from being ambitious; I have rather sought to stimulate them to greater desires and more comprehensive plans. At the same time, I wish to caution them against ambition that is *atheistic*. You hear of men being the architects of their own fortunes; and there is a sense in which that expression conveys sentiments that are truly laudable. I wish, however, to alter the phraseology; henceforth let us consider God as the Architect of our fortunes, and ourselves but the builders working under His direction. Do not let us seek to be both architect and builder. "In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He will direct thy paths." We shall never be relieved from the discipline of work; the great trials of service will constantly be allotted to us; the one thing to be assured of is, that we are moving along the designs which God himself has set before us, and then, how stormy soever may be the days in which we labour, and how many soever the difficulties with which we have to contend, the building shall surely be completed, even to the putting on of the top-stone.

Do I speak this morning to any poor, crushed man, whose tower during recent commercial panics has been thrown down to the dust? But a short time ago you had a good social position, you lived in comfort, if not in luxury, your name was a watchword of confidence among men of honour; but to-day you are surrounded by the ruins of your fortune, and your children are almost reduced to beggary. Let us speak about such matters with all tenderness, yet without shrinking from the moral

aspects of life. How was your tower built? Did you build it atheistically? Did you live entirely in the realm of your imagination, losing all self-restraint, and plunging into the most riotous excesses of speculation? If so, the explanation of the throwing down of your tower is not far to seek. On the other hand, if you were building honestly, and have been victimised by evil-minded men, it will one day be shown to you that the destruction of your tower has been ordered by Almighty God, and so sanctified as to bring into your heart a stronger faith, a tenderer love, and a more enduring patience. Do not say that all is lost simply because all is thrown down. The foundation abideth for ever; continue to build upon that, and be assured of the final reward. I do not know but that panics are sent of God himself, often directly, for the chastening and purification of man. Uninterrupted prosperity might prove itself to be the direst affliction which could befall society. Do we know what plagues might be engendered by the continuous shining of a cloudless sun? The high winds which try men's buildings, and often throw them down, are sent for the cleansing of the atmosphere.

Do I speak this morning to any who have but little standing-place in the world,—to men who have never built a city or a tower? Let me say to such, "In my Father's house are many mansions"! We ourselves may not have built anything that deserves the name of a city or a tower, but Jesus Christ has gone away to prepare a place for us, and we who to-day are the children of want, having hardly where to lay our head, shall be called into a city of glory. The poor Christian has no reason to be discouraged so far as the great future is concerned; to-day there is little about him that men may call attractive; to-day he is the child of want, but in so much as he is in Jesus Christ he holds a title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Let us now go out again into the world from this place in which we have sat hearing the word of the Lord; let us resume our building, and in doing so let us invoke the presence and the guidance of Infinite Wisdom through all the processes of our life. Our business is not to build quickly, but to build upon a right foundation and in a right spirit. Life is more than a mere competition as between man and man; it is not who can be done first, but who can work best; it is not who can rise highest in the shortest time, but who is working most patiently and lovingly in accordance with the designs of God.

City Temple Notes.

1. The Publishers inform us that the *City Temple* is selling at the rate of four thousand copies weekly. We are much encouraged by this gratifying sale, inasmuch as it enables us to address a very large congregation. Certainly it imposes upon us the responsibility of endeavouring to improve the *City Temple* as much as possible,—still, as this circulation has been secured by an abrupt and unfinished style, it is not intended to take away this characteristic by arriving at anything like polished composition. We thank our friends most heartily, and ask them to cheer us still further by doubling our constituency. To-day, Thursday, Nov. 25, we have had the intense joy of addressing a noble throng of attentive hearers, and we cannot but hope that deep impressions have been made on many hearts. May the Almighty Spirit, True and Holy, the Unseen but All-seeing Ghost, carry on his work increasingly in our midst! Let all our readers say, *Amen!* The following extract from a note by a clergyman of the Established Church, will show that the spirit of Christian brotherhood is not extinct:—"I feel constrained to send you a line to thank you for your refreshing and edifying discourse of this morning, and to assure you of the prayers of a brother in the Lord for a rich blessing to rest upon your labours in the heart of our great metropolis. The large attendance—at such an hour in the day—delighted my heart; may as many be induced to attend on each occasion!"

2. The want of many men is a want of common sense. We are repeatedly asked to preach from home on *Sundays*. Just beginning a new ministerial era, called to a position of no ordinary difficulty, we are respectfully requested to go a hundred miles into the country to preach Charity Sermons! At the risk of appearing to depreciate the honour, we must say that the unreasonableness of the request, considering the speciality of the circumstances, is to us quite inexplicable. Had we been here fifteen or twenty years, the case would have been altogether different; or had we been in a flourishing suburb where it is beyond the power of man to keep a chapel *empty*, we should gladly have helped in as many directions as possible,—but being in Cheapside, in a supposed grave, almost next door to churches which are "like banquet halls deserted," we feel that (under the Divine blessing) much depends upon unbroken constancy of service, and that interruption would be ruin. We say this in all frankness, *to save writing letters in reply to invitations which cannot be accepted.*

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, December 2nd, 1869.

After singing a hymn, the following passages of Scripture were repeated :—

"All we, like sheep, have gone astray."

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant."

"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

"We ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

"We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

The Prayer.

Almighty God, do Thou renew us with Thine own image. We shall be satisfied when we awake with Thy likeness. We have lost the lineaments of Thy beauty and purity; we have become disorganized and deformed, and ruined, and there is no help for us but in the mighty arm of the loving God, and in the infinite grace of His Son. We bless Thee in so far as we have known the mystery of the new birth in our own experience. We rejoice that though we cannot explain Thy processes

upon our mind and upon our heart, yet are we conscious of new and pure desires, stretching up towards the heaven, and crying out for the living God. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to Thy mercy hast Thou saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. We are born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the word of the God which liveth and abideth for ever. Help us, now that we are born into Thy kingdom, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In malice may we ever be children, in understanding may we be men. By the wonderful discipline of Thy providence, by sorrows and joys intermingled with infinite wisdom, by the disappointment of our hope, and the realization of our desires, by all the contradictions which make up this strange human lot, do Thou train us until we become perfect men in Christ Jesus our Lord. Deliver us from the bondage of our evil lusts; destroy within us the dominion of the Evil One, and set up Thy kingdom in our hearts, and reign Thou in undivided and perpetual empire. Let the Holy Ghost to-day be our life, and light, and joy; quicken our spiritual discernment that we may see things that are not seen; so excite our highest sensibilities as to enable us to respond with instant and grateful love to all the appeals of Thy truth. Thou alone canst renew human life and establish it in everlasting blessedness. Truly, Thou workest in mystery, yet are the results of Thy work beautiful and noble exceedingly. Thou hidest Thyself in the chambers of our heart, so that none can see Thee, and yet we know that Thou art there by the flooding love which overflows our being, by the heavenward desires which stir our nature with blessed unrest, and by the lofty power with which we are enabled to do all the common work of life. Abide with us! When Thou goest, our light is put out; when Thou returnest, no shadow can be found upon us. In the light of Thy mercy we see all our guilt; in the sweetness of Thy love we feel the bitterness of our sin. Abide with us! By Thy word we see the folly of our own wisdom; by thy Holy Spirit we know the wickedness of the devil. Abide with us! Where our sin abounds let Thy grace much more abound. Shame us by the incessancy of Thy love, rather than destroy us by Thy great power. O Loving One, patient, tender, abide with us! And to God who made us, and to God who redeemed us with an infinite price, to the Holy Ghost, the God who sanctifieth us, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON HUMAN REGENERATION.

"How can a man be born again when he is old?"—John iii. 4.

Nicodemus did not deny the doctrine of the Second Birth, he merely started a difficulty. Though a master in Israel, he was apparently destitute of that spiritual insight which sees the possibility of the very stones being raised up as children unto Abraham—that sensitive and hopeful ideality which sees everywhere the throbbings of an inner life, and believes instantly in every word which even remotely hints at immortality. Nicodemus was a literalist; his ideas were cramped by the fixed meanings of words; he never could have written the Apocalypse; seal and trumpet and vial were not for such men as Nicodemus. He was startled by the word "born"; probably he doubted its exactness; it was, in his estimation, too specific in its common meaning, to be literally applied to anything else; consequently he took his stand upon nature, and judged as if there were but one way by which life could come into the world. He who had been convinced by the miracle was astounded by the metaphor. What if there were no metaphors? What if pillars never became arches? What if dogma never coloured and brightened into parable? The answer of Jesus Christ was strikingly consistent with his whole method of teaching; the strangeness of his language excited attention, provoked thought, sometimes awakened controversy, and so through a process of troubled inquiry and anxious strife, men often entered into the mystery of Christ's rest. It is a hard way; but the men who travel it come into great strength. Simon Peter asked no questions at first, but Simon Peter denied his Master at last. Paul began with enmity, and ended with most passionate and rapturous love; Nicodemus expressed a wonder, almost dark enough to be a doubt, but in the long run he took his stand by the dead body of "the Teacher come from God." It seems as if every man must at some time in his religious life have doubts and even anguish of heart, respecting Jesus Christ and His kingdom; and as

if some men particularly, of whom Simon Peter may be taken as a notable example, must be utterly dashed to pieces before God can begin His constructive work upon them. Nicodemus had been an attentive observer of the public life of Jesus Christ. He was one of those persons who always ground their course upon facts; they never throw themselves completely upon great principles, or risk themselves upon the supposed strength of an argument; they only *believe* history, they never *make* it. The facts which Nicodemus had observed led to reasoning, and the reason was expressed in this conclusion: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The admission is one of the utmost spiritual importance, because if the works are from God, what of the *words?* Can the same fountain send forth sweet waters and bitter? Can the worker have found his way to the Omnipotent except through the Omniscient? Yet, important as the admission was, Jesus Christ returned an answer, which apparently had no bearing upon the subject of miracles—"Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The subject which Nicodemus introduced was *miracles*, the subject which Jesus Christ introduced was *regeneration*. Did Jesus Christ, then, evade the question of miracles? No; He incidently showed the true position and value of the mighty works as elements in His ministry; they were hardly to be mentioned; they lay somewhat remote from His great scheme; they were symbolic, and illustrative of one great miracle; they all pointed towards the final triumph of His power, namely, the second birth of creatures who had dishonoured their first estate.

When men are not sure of their ground they make sudden deflections, and raise side issues, so as to escape a perilous topic. Read superficially, Jesus Christ's remark about the new birth looks like the stratagem of a skilful controversialist, but looked at more carefully, we may find it to be strictly in the line of the original subject. Earnest men often avail themselves of ellipsis. They are impatient of mere detail. They are straightened until their work be accomplished. Jesus did not evade the subject of miracles; He merely passed the intermediate points, and went at once to the spiritual results which the great works of His hands were meant to prefigure and elucidate. Not only so; He taught that unless every man himself became the subject of a miracle, the miracle of regeneration, his belief in other miracles would not admit him into the kingdom of heaven; other miracles were to be looked at, this was to be felt; other miracles were public, this was intensely personal; other miracles were material, this was moral; other miracles give new

views, this gives new life. This miracle of regeneration is the only explanation of all other miracles; and until a man has undergone its power, the other miracles may possibly be stumbling-blocks to his reason —except a man be born again he cannot see; cannot see anything as it really is; specially cannot see the kingdom of God.

This call from outward circumstances to the deepest experiences which the soul can undergo, not unnaturally suggested the question, "How can these things be?" And the answer does not attempt to clear itself of the original mystery—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The meaning of the answer would seem to be that we are not to deny results simply because we cannot understand processes: we may see a renewed life, but cannot see the renewing Spirit; we may gather the fruits of autumn, though we may not know by what cunning the leaf was woven, nor can we follow the skill that set the blossom in its place. Jesus Christ thus gives Nature an illustrative function; all its beauty, its splendour, its force, is to teach something beyond itself; there is a voice in the wind other than strikes the hearing of the body; beyond the common fragrance of the flowers there is an odour which reaches the soul; the glitter of starlight comes from a fire, veiled from all eyes. Jesus Christ thus found a common law in Nature and in grace; the Spirit is the same whether it direct the course of the wind or renew the springs of the heart,—the earth to the spiritual mind is but a lower heaven. This method of reasoning from the physical to the spiritual gives great interest to life and nature; it is not meant that we should force meanings from the things which are round about us, but we are certainly taught that there is congruity between the works of God, and that the limitation of our earthly knowledge should teach us modesty respecting the things which are heavenly. Look at the words, "Thou hearest . . . . but canst not tell." Man occupies an outside position; even in common things, God fixes a tabernacle of His own; He will not tell man the whole of his secret; He brings man to his appointed stature, and then says that man cannot, even by taking thought, add one cubit to it; He counts the hairs upon the heads of His saints, and tells them that they cannot make one hair white or black; He says to the Master of Israel, "Thou hearest the wind, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." As a mere matter of fact, then, apart from theological inquiries, there are limitations to human knowledge. Man does not even understand himself; on every side he touches immediately the boundary of his information and his power; the atom baffles him; the insect is only half comprehended; the sea sounds like a great

mockery; the dwelling-place of the light is yet undiscovered, and as for darkness, no man knoweth its habitation; the wise man knows only his folly; he cannot tell by what way the light is parted which scattereth the east wind upon the earth; he knows not whether the rain had a father, or who hath begotten the drops of dew; he cannot tell out of whose womb came the ice, or who gendered the hoar frost of heaven; Mazzaroth, Arcturus, Pleiades, and Orion pay no heed to his voice; he heareth the sound of the wind, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth!

These considerations show the spirit in which the subject of the New Birth should be approached. It is to be a spirit of self-restraint, of conscious limitation of ability, and by so much a spirit of preparedness to receive, not a mere confirmation of speculative opinion, *but a Divine revelation of doctrine.* The expression of wonder is not forbidden; there is a wonder which belongs to the region of doubt, there is also a wonder which accompanies glimpses of new phases of truth. This wonder is one of the joys of the soul; it often forces the cry of delight, the shout of men who have come suddenly on much spoil. A great shock of surprise seems to come upon every one respecting this new life. The shock comes differently, indeed, but always comes. Sometimes, for example, it comes on the *intellectual* side, as in the case of Nicodemus, throwing into confusion the arguments and theories of a lifetime; sometimes the shock comes upon the selfish instincts, as in the case of the rich young man who cannot give all his possessions to the poor; sometimes the shock comes on the natural sensibilities, as in the case of Bunyan, extorting groans and lamentations the most piteous and distressing. Such men represent the most dissimilar experiences. The young man who had large property, might know nothing of the struggles of the master in Israel, and John Bunyan, who had no riches at all, knew nothing of the desperate hold which property may get upon the heart. Hence the folly of setting up a common standard of judgment, or of any man measuring all other persons by himself. The intellectual man has troubles peculiarly his own. Is it an easy thing to pronounce oneself a fool before God—to give up intelligence and conviction, and begin just where little children begin? The man finds it is hard work to give up one by one the elements which he imagined were necessary to his manhood, and to start again empty-handed, as it were, or, at least, with nothing that bears the mark of his own wit and independence—to know as much about the great changes of his heart as he knows about the course of the wind. He would part with money rather than with theories; he would endure the laceration of his natural sensibilities, rather than surrender his logical position. What then? He

can *only know the agony of birth by giving up what he prizes most.* He might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet remain out of God's kingdom; he might give his body to be burned and yet keep the bad heart. God will not give His kingdom other than as a revelation, and a revelation always implies the ignorance and helplessness of the man to whom it is given.

Though the *mystery* of regeneration may for ever remain unexplained, yet it is important to have an idea of the *truths* with which it is inseparably identified. It would appear that Jesus Christ delivered the most complete and formal gospel discourse to Nicodemus that he ever uttered. That discourse occupies twenty-one verses of the chapter in which the text is found, and touches upon such subjects as—the work of the Holy Ghost; the Lifting up of the Son of man; Faith; Divine Love; Salvation; Eternal Life. All this Jesus Christ spoke to the man who came by night to talk about miracles. Could He have said more if He had called the universe to audience? It is as if all the stars had come out together to light a trembling traveller along a lonely road.

What Jesus Christ himself has left as a mystery it would be presumptuous in any man to attempt to explain. We hear the sound of the wind; we cannot follow it in all its way, yet we know the analogy of intellectual life. Can we explain the origin and succession of ideas? How did they begin to expand, mature? Do we know where the child was displaced by the man? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." So, too, are many of the processes of the mind. As with thoughts, so with affections. Can we make plain all the secret processes of the heart, and trace the transition through which the soul passes from distrust to confidence, or from indifference to admiration and love. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so, too, are the troubles and changes of the heart. All birth is mysterious. "Thou knowest not how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child." Can we say why one grain brings forth thirty, and another sixty, and another a hundred fold? If we cannot understand these earthly things, how can we understand things that are heavenly? Yet, as the sound of the wind is heard, so are there results which prove the fact of our regeneration. Jesus Christ says that if any man is in Him, that man bringeth forth much fruit, as a branch that abideth in the vine. The apostle Paul says that if any man be in Christ, that man is a new creature, living in a new world, all old things gone. The apostle John says that men know that they dwell in Christ because Christ has given them of His Spirit. This is the practical side

of the doctrine of regeneration. Thou hearest the sound thereof—"secret things belong to the Lord our God." The regenerated man is known by the spirit which animates his life, for it is the motive which gives quality to character; the regenerated man lives by rule, but it is the unwritten and unchanging rule of love; the regenerated man advances in orderliness, but it is the orderliness, not of mechanical stipulation, but of vigorous and affluent life; the regenerated man is constantly strengthened and ennobled by an inextinguishable ambition to be filled with all fulness of Christ—his new life springs up for ever as a well of water that cannot be exhausted.

It is important to dwell upon the signs of regeneration, lest the doctrine be classed with merely speculative or metaphysical theology, a study of deeply intellectual interest, but powerless in the life. It is quite conceivable that an unregenerate man may do many outwardly decent or even beautiful things, just as it is conceivable that a watch may be altered by the hands, and not by the regulator, or as it is conceivable that the ruddiness of the cheek may be artificial, and not natural. If an unregenerate nature can produce the same quality of moral life as a nature that has been born again by the power of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of the inspired writers is simply untrue, because that testimony declares that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Thus, on the explicit authority of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, the broadest possible distinction is made between the First Birth and the Second Birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; marvel not that ye must be born again."

In making this great claim on behalf of regeneration, it is easy to see the ground upon which a condemnatory charge may be urged against those who bear the name of Jesus Christ. How is it that new-born men often walk as the children of this world?

The answer is, that a man has not only a soul, but a body; that while the soul is renewed the body remains in its own condition; consequently, though the Christian delights in the law of God with the inward mind, yet he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into the captivity of the law of sin, which is in his members. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It is undoubtedly true that the spirit may attain great mastery over the flesh, so much so as to

explain the apostle's words—"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Still, as a matter of fact, the body is dying; an inexorable law condemns and hastens it to the grave; what, if in going down, it should trouble and vex the spirit? The Christian man is an anomaly; in a sense which unregenerate men can never understand, his body and his soul are at constant war. What, then, is the complement of regeneration? The complement of regeneration is resurrection, and not until resurrection has done for the body what regeneration has done for the soul, can men be perfect in the stature and quality of Jesus Christ.

Is there anything suggestive in the inquiry, How can a man be born when he is old? What does the old man care for new sights, new eras, new services? Does the old tree ever ask to be transplanted into new gardens? Still the old should not be left without a word of hope. We have known the spring work a wonderful transformation even upon old trees, making them strangely beautiful with green leaf and blushing blossom. I remember standing in a large forest, on an early spring day; the sky was bright, and there was a keen vigour in the air; the great trees were stretching their branches, as if appealing to the heavens; they seemed to be saying, "O Spring, come quickly, and clothe us with thy verdant beauty; we have shivered through the long cold winter, and now would be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. O Spring, thy kingdom come! And what can I, a poor leafless human tree, do but carry forward that prayer to a higher significance? O fairer Spring, O richer Summer, O purer Light, make me beautiful as a child of God—Saviour, Father, thy kingdom come!

Is there anything suggestive in the circumstance that Nicodemus came to Jesus Christ by *night?* Oh, the night!—how many troubled doubters and inquirers are weary of its darkness! Yet they are thankful for it, because it protects them in part from the sneer of a faithless faith, and gives them an opportunity of hiding the tears which daylight should never see. It is better that the night of the soul should not write its history. Let Christian men be mindful how they throw their weapons into the night. Some honest man may be struck, some anxious heart may be wounded, some who are coming to Jesus may be hindered. Those who come by night should be encouraged. God himself made the night, as well as the day; the moon is His, as well as the sun. We know little more of Nicodemus, but what we do know is sufficient. Where do we last find him? We find him at the Cross and in the Light! He had found his way through the night to the morning, from the miracles to the Cross; and *there* shall all true inquirers be found at last—at the Cross and in the Light!

Let it be understood, then, that in speaking of the New Birth we do not attempt to explain the mystery; on the contrary, we allow it not only as a fact, but as a necessity. We cannot have religion of any kind without mystery. We cannot construct the clumsiest mythology without having mystery; we cannot be Pagans without mystery; we cannot carve a slab to the Unknown God without sinking into the darkness of mystery. But through the Christian mystery there comes a Christian fact, and it is by that fact that Christianity must be judged. We know the new *man* by his new *life;* we know the new worker by his new *works;* we know the heart by the hand. A Christian is the best defence of Christianity. A living man is the most convincing argument on behalf of the Christian religion. We are called not to reformation, but to regeneration—not to morality (popularly so called), but to theology as Jesus Christ interpreted it. If we accept the heavenly call, we shall at last be found—*at the* CROSS *and in the* LIGHT. It is finished. Christ and Christians are for ever one.

Concluding Prayer.

Almighty God, work mightily in our hearts, and give us the joy of the New Birth! Sometimes we are so distressed by our sins that we feel as if we needed to be born again every day,—and is it not true that we do require continual regeneration? We feel that regeneration is not a complete and final act on any one day, but that our whole life upon earth is the period over which our renewal extends. Yet we pray Thee to save us from the temptation to indolence which is associated with such a notion; help us to strive as if all could be done at once, and then to wait with trembling love until our new life is perfectly established. We do not complain of the mystery of Thy working; we rather glory in it. How can we find out God to perfection? Thou art in heaven, far beyond the atmosphere in which we live and move, and have our being; we know not the height and splendour of the sanctuary which overlooks the universe; we live in an atom; we think in a circle; we come again and again upon our old courses of thought; our minds can tell us nothing new; do Thou continue to surround us with Thy mysteries, and to inspire us with Thy truth. Ever call us to higher attainment in the blessed life of faith in the blessed Saviour. O Jesus, Lamb of God, whose grace is all-sufficient, be to us a constant salvation. Day by day

dwell with us, and may our whole life shine with heavenly radiance, in proof of our fellowship with Thee. We love Thee more than words can tell; we love Thee most when we most need Thee by reason of the burden and the bitterness of our sin. We bless Thee for many a secret visit; often Thou dost surprise us into grateful tears, by reason of Thine unexpected visits to our hearts in their hours of sad wondering and troubled hope. We hail Thee, O Deliverer, O Mighty One, O God the Son! As Thou, O Blessed Word, wast mad flesh, so may Thy divine Word be made flesh by us who receive it, and live upon it; help us to repeat in unearthliness and sublimity of life the holy mystery of Thine own incarnation! Emmanuel, never leave us—Son of God, hold our hand for ever in Thine own! Amen, Lord Jesus, Amen.

City Temple Notes.

We have resolved to attempt an occasional variation of common pulpit methods. Next Sabbath morning (December 12, 1869) we intend to deliver a Parable on Christian Faith. Though we have a strong dislike of anecdotes in the pulpit, yet we are confident that the dramatic element may now, as in the days of Jesus Christ, be most usefully introduced into Christian teaching. Our purpose is to trace, at least in rough outline, the difficulties of an honest doubter, and to answer those difficulties, so far as we can. Instead of treating the mysteries of the Christian religion abstractly, we shall endeavour to invest them with the interest which is excited by the individuality of a determined doubter, who puts his case strongly, though not irreverently. A series of Parables of this kind ought to have special attractions for the *Young* and the *Sceptical;* for the young, because of the personality and vivacity of the dialogue; and for the sceptical, because of our earnest desire to meet the case of men who claim to be independent and enlightened doubters in relation to many fundamental Christian propositions. We hereby issue an invitation to *Young Men*, resident in the City of London, who are not already attached to other congregations. The Service will commence at 10.45.

This attempt to preach by parable will enable us, to some extent, to overcome a difficulty in another direction. A few weeks ago, we announced our determination not to deliver *lectures*, and, acting upon that determination, we have refused several valued invitations. We have been urged to modify our decision, and, as the request comes from a high quarter, we have carefully reconsidered the whole question. Our dislike of lectures remains and deepens; our love of preaching the Gospel continues and increases: but, by delivering parables on Christian subjects, we may be enabled to keep the spirit of our decision, and yet to show our interest in Young Men's Associations. There is one difficulty which must be clearly understood by those who may invite our service—viz., we could not deliver fewer than *three* parables without breaking the connection, and by so much impairing the interest of the discussion; we should, therefore, be under the necessity of taking three Monday evenings in succession, so as to secure anything approaching completeness. Our help in this matter can be but very occasional, yet it will be a sincere pleasure to us to show our interest in the spiritual culture of the young men of London.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, December 9th, 1869.

After singing the hymn commencing "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah," the following passages of Scripture were repeated :—

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat."

"The lust of the eyes . . . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world."

"They did eat and were filled, for he gave them their own desire ; they were not estranged from their lust, but while their meat was yet in their mouths the wrath of God came upon them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel."

"Seek not after your own heart and your own eyes."

"Be not wise in thine own eyes."

The Prayer.

Living God, and God of all living, save us from death. Show us, by increasing our life, that Thy great purpose is to bring us into a great and glorious immortality. Deliver us from our own notions of life and honour, and help us to live in joyful obedience to Thy will. Specially teach us that it is in Thy power to make death itself the servant of life, and show us that by Thy mysterious law that which we sow is not quickened except it die. Teach us that we ourselves must die before we

can truly and for ever live. Lord, slay us with Thine own sword, that we perish not by the hand of the devil! Our hope is in crucifixion with Jesus Christ. With Him would we humbly say, Not our will but Thine be done! Thou hast severely yet graciously chastised us when we have sought to walk in our own light, and to turn away from the brightness of Thy face. Thou hast punished us by allowing us to have our own way. We have put our feet into the nest of the serpent, and drunk greedily at poisoned wells; often have we mistaken the coiled scorpion for an egg, and been stung for our own ignorance and foolhardiness. We said unto the darkness, "Let there be light," but the darkness gave no heed to our voice; we commanded the waters to stand back in heaps, but the floods despised us; we smote the rock that we might find in it the cooling stream, but the flint made no answer to our rod: Thou, Lord, must go before us to make all our way plain—Thou must teach us—Thou must overrule all our desires—Thou must inspire the prayer and then satisfy it with blessing. Not our will but Thine be done! Blind, we cannot see things as they really are; deaf, we hear not all the feet and wings that are for ever busy about our way; Lord, see for us and hear for us, and teach us what to do, and wherein we are stiff-necked and self-sufficient do Thou break us down by the most humbling disappointments and by the bitterest mortifications. We see but parts of things—Thou seest round the whole universe; we hear but the sounding of the present hour—Thou hearest the voices of all the future:—O Lord of Hosts, O God of ages, O Spirit of eternity, *Not our will but Thine be done.* Amen and Amen.

The Sermon.

ON MEN HAVING THEIR OWN WAY.

"He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."—PSALM cvi. 15.

IN opening a discourse upon these words, let us remind ourselves of the mocking part which unregulated and selfish *desire* or *request* has invariably played in human history. Our own desires, born of our own lusts, and tempting us to infringements of Divine order, have never brought us anything but loss and pain and shamefacedness. When we have succumbed to their tyrannous power we have found that the prize was death, and that the expected joy was intolerable as the smoke of the bottomless pit. I could ask you to bear me out in this strong statement by many dreary passages from your own experience. I quote from the book of the world, and from no merely private record, when I say that our desires have often yielded us deep delight, and their fulfilment has often smitten us as with a mortal plague. The tale is an old one. All its chapters were written in the first Paradise. We have set our hearts upon some forbidden pleasure; by night we have dreamed of its attainment; we have sat silently for hours luxuriating in happy expectation; we have woven our plans like a cunningly fashioned net; we made every gate secure; we quieted our best monitor with deadly opiates; we burned and quivered with delight,—O how sweet was to be the joy, how complete the security! We took many a stolen glance at the forbidden tree; we preferred its fragrance to all the other odours of the garden; as the crisis hastened we felt somewhat of hesitation, we trembled, we looked round to know whether any eye was upon us, we went forward a step and paused to catch the meaning of some ghostly sound that sobbed in the rising wind, we plucked up our dying courage and took the longed-for object, and then—then—what had we? The heavens and the earth became changed to us—every ray of the sun was a sword—there was poison in every wave of the air—little children seemed to shun our presence as if hell had already laid

hold upon us—passers-by escaped from our way as if our secret had been revealed to them—and we who went to gather the fruits of our own decree brought back the fiery sheaves of damnation!

All this will be instantly acknowledged so far as great sins are concerned,—such as adultery, theft, murder, and the like; but my purpose is to compel a much deeper confession, to say that we never depart from the Divine will and seek our own desires without coming to failure and grief. We are called upon to acknowledge God, not in some great occasions of life only, but in *all* our ways; and it is only in so far as we refuse to take a single step in life, how unimportant soever it may at first sight appear, without distinctly assuring ourselves of God's acquiescence, that we walk surely to the most pure and abiding success.

In applying the principle of the text, let us look in the first instance for illustration to the man who starts life with an idea that *to be rich* is the highest result of labour. All his plans are laid accordingly. He lives that he may be rich; at night he dreams of wealth; all his inquiries have direct reference to the accumulation of property; when he reads, it is that he may more perfectly instruct himself in the art of money-getting; and what if, after devoting the whole strength of his manhood to this one object, he should succeed? Would it be very wonderful if a man who set himself night and day to the attainment of one object, especially such an object as money-getting, should succeed? The conquest of a world of mud, a mere handful of dust, ought not to be so very tremendous a difficulty to any man who resolutely bends himself on achieving it. The man whose case we are now supposing does succeed; after twenty or thirty years' labour he pronounces himself a rich man: *but look at his soul!* I know of no poorer man than he who has nothing but gold. What is he but a magnificent shell? What has he for his barren universe but the empty cavity of the golden calf which he has spent a lifetime in fashioning? He is afraid of the shortening days; he is afraid of his servants; he is afraid of thieves by night; he is afraid of the telegraph and the post by day; any wind that arises may blow away his property; he has no mental resources; he is afraid to be alone: look at him in this condition, and learn how wealth itself can be the most distressing poverty with which a human creature can be afflicted. It must not be understood by this that it is impossible to be rich and yet to enjoy the highest prosperity of soul. On such a subject a half truth is equal to a whole falsehood, and therefore I take the opportunity of distinctly declaring it as my belief, that it is possible for a man to attain the very highest point of success in this world, and yet for his soul to maintain its rightful supremacy,—possible for a man to stand upon the great mountain

of his worldly honour possessing perfect integrity of spirit and high enjoyment of Christian blessings. At the same time, are we not given to understand by Jesus Christ himself that to be rich is to encounter one of the most subtle and mighty temptations that can assail the soul? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" To have an overflowing abundance of this world's goods, never to know the pang of hunger, or the crying of a desire that cannot be satisfied so far as this world can meet it, is surely to be walking as it were along the edge of an abyss, to be proceeding along a line on either side of which there are depths that have never been measured,—yet it is possible to have this world's goods and yet to know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. What I condemn is the determined resolution of any man at all risks and all costs to be rich; it is of course quite possible that he may succeed to the fullest extent, yet when he has succeeded he will find that he has gone down in soul-quality, in the measure of his manhood, in the delicacy of his spirit;—success is failure; victory is defeat; the prize is ruin!

The principle of the text includes all who would escape from painful duty in order that they may indulge love of ease and quiet. There are men to whom the point of heroism is for ever inaccessible; they wish to be let alone; they cannot bear what to them is an irritating and tormenting energy on the part even of their best friends; they will not expose themselves to the drudgery of civilization; they are content to find heaven in their couch, and to worship before the dreary altar of a sleeping divinity. You know such men perhaps in considerable numbers. If the world were left in their hands, no advance would be made towards a higher state of things. Their only aim is to be quiet, to escape labour, to shirk responsibility. You never find their names on subscription lists; you never find them taking part in any controversy whatsoever; they know not the meaning of the word "champion," and the higher word "sacrifice" is to them an impenetrable mystery; they hesitate not to describe as fools the men who are expending their best strength for the education and advancement of the world; they often indulge a sickly sneer at the expense of the noble leaders who are willing to give themselves up even to crucifixion for the world's redemption. Now it is perfectly possible for such men to have their requests granted to them; they can be let alone; they can be shut up in their ignoble obscurity;—but look at their souls! what have they of aspiration, of generous impulse, and heaven-born desire? Never having been hated, it is impossible they can ever be deeply loved; never having

been cast out for truth's sake, they know nothing of the high and ennobling joy which fills the hearts of men who have been called, not only to do, but to suffer for that which is heavenly. I put before you young men a very serious alternative: if you like you can live a strictly negative life; you can be let alone; you can have the reputation of being innocent, inoffensive, harmless young men; you can be well-dressed cyphers; you need never mix up in the world's fray; you need never send a sword upon the earth, nor need you ever kindle a fire against which the children of evil shall cry out: you can have all these requests if you like, but let me tell you openly, that having realized your desire, your souls will have declined in all that is lofty and pure and godlike. On the other hand, you can be "heroes in the strife": you can associate yourselves with ideas that create revolution; you can follow leaders who are never afraid of danger, and who are most courageous in the presence of all that is oppressive; in all this you need not be impertinent, immodest, self-asserting,—all this can be done with the loveliest humility, with the sublimest self-sacrifice. You can be known as a terror to evil-doers; your name can become a name that shall be detested of all men that love darkness, and that work evil greedily with both hands; and if you elect so to be and so to do, your souls will be called to the highest prosperity with which God can bless them, you will have a consciousness of peace and an enjoyment of hope which can come to you by no other process than that of the fullest self-sacrifice and the most determined action on behalf of principles that are Divine and eternal. In our intercourse to-day, then, let it be distinctly understood that it is possible for men to have their request for ease granted to them, but the granting of it will be the ruin of their higher nature; on the other hand, it is distinctly asserted that those who lose their ease for Christ's sake will come into a deep and perpetual peace, kindred to the quiet and tranquillity of God himself.

The principle applies to men who make all their arrangements with a view to the comfort of their physical tastes exclusively. There are business men in our city to-day who have schemed for a future which, if analyzed, would disclose nothing but a careful regard for personal and domestic comfort. I can give you the brief programme of such men: it runs after this fashion—Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements. I thought I could have mentioned a fifth object of pursuit, but I believe this exhausts the whole scheme. Now it is for them to say whether they will persist in urging this request. They are at perfect liberty to leave the City, to abandon the poor, to get away from all that is fœtid, noisome, and otherwise offensive; but let them beware lest,

in reaching this supposed heaven, they find that they have gone in the wrong direction, and that where they expected heaven to begin they find that they have only reached the outward edge of earth. Men who make arrangements exclusively with a view to physical comfort never ask the questions which are the chief inquiries of souls that truly live. They do not say, What kind of preaching shall we have in the locality to which we propose to move? What scholastic advantages will be available? What libraries will be accessible? No! What they want is Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements—and they get them; but the fruit which they had coveted so eagerly turns to ashes in their mouths! On this point I should like to deliver a very distinct testimony. There are men who do perfectly right in going to the country and enjoying all that fresh air and sunlight can do for them. After the exciting chase and toil of the day they require all the calmness which they can secure. But let me tell you that there are dangers connected with this kind of suburban life. It is not always a safe thing to train children in the higher planes of civilization without giving them to know that there are strata below them in which sin and poverty and misery are playing terrible parts. What if, in giving your children all the advantages of education and the enjoyments of country life, you should bring them into the City on the Lord's Day to enable them by teaching in the Sunday School, or by aiding other Christian agencies, to have an opportunity of expending their culture for the benefit of the unfavoured and the lost? I take it upon myself to say, that if you could spend any portion of your time in so doing, you would return to your country enjoyments with a keener relish, you would find in your fruits a sweetness, and see in your flowers a flush of beauty which otherwise could never be enjoyed.

A man may be seeking his own desires, and deluding himself with the promise that after he has realized them he will turn his success to the advantage of the Christian cause. He says, that when he becomes rich, which he intends doing with the utmost possible speed, the Christian treasury shall never be allowed to decline; he boldly says, that when he builds his palace the Christian advocate shall never need a home; he does not hesitate to declare that when he has attained wide social influence, everything that is good shall have the fullest advantage of his reputation. All this sounds very well, but let us take care lest we be deluding ourselves, and be actually losing the very spiritual power which is necessary to the realization of those high promises. By such delusions as these the devil is clothed in the costliest purple, and passed into the man's life as a guest sent of God. Alas! men can tell lies to

their own hearts. The left hand can cheat the right. Even conscience itself can be put to sleep, and forced to fraudulent endorsements, while the spell of slumber is unbroken. A terrible danger is this, namely, that a man may be going east and west at the same time! It is possible for a man's heart to be divided against itself, for a man to be living two lives, for a man to be promising himself things that are most heavenly, while at the same time he is kneeling with constant devotion before the altar that is inscribed to the devil When will men be honest to themselves? When will men dare to go into their very innermost hearts, and look at themselves in all candour and faithfulness? Men are wicked when they have to hush the Divine voice that is within them; men are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin when they quench the spirit that God has put within them for the interpretation of duty and the demand of right.

Mark where the judgment of God falls—it falls on the highest nature—it falls *on the soul!* "He gave them their request, but he sent leanness into their souls." The man on whom God's disapprobation rests withers at his very root. His mental power declines, his moral nature shrivels; he goes down in the volume and quality of his being. Think of a *lean soul!* No compass, no grandeur, no tenderness of manhood! A lean soul, narrow, stunted, withered, sapless, blind, deaf, idiotic! The man *would* have his prize; he *would* set up his own wisdom; he *would* be as God unto himself;—and now look at him, and see how hunger-bitten and ghastly is his dishonoured soul. You have heard of the white ant, that commits such terrible devastations in wooden buildings in some portions of the globe. That little insect, an inch long, will insert itself into the largest wooden structure that men can put up, and in course of time it will eat away the whole of it, leaving nothing but the thinnest outer shell; the building will look as if nothing had befallen it; the shape will be unaltered; but put your finger upon it, or bring the slightest pressure to bear upon it, and you will find that it is no longer solid, but a hollow and useless outline. Is there not a more terrible power that enters into the inner nature of man, and utterly consumes all that is strong and noble and beautiful in his soul? Is it not possible for a man to have a fair exterior, and yet to have no mind, no sympathy, no tenderness? This is the dreadful ruin against which I seek to caution myself and others. So far as our outward circumstances are concerned, our fullest request may have been granted. We may have estates, titles, honours; men may wait for our word, and follow our guidance in all secular speculations and engagements; and yet it may be said of us, "In thy lifetime thou receivest thy good things"—so with the request, on the

one hand answered to the utmost, we have on the other a soul that has been dwarfed almost up to the point of extinction.

A man sets his mind on standing on some high place; he points to a pillar, and says that if he could ascend to its summit he would see from that lofty elevation glimpses of heaven, and he determines that he will stand upon that summit, whatever hazards he may incur. At length God grants him his request, and when the man has ascended to the eminence which he coveted, what does he find? Sand, sand, sand! Mile on mile of sand—sand for mile on mile! And now he wishes to descend; but how to get down is his great difficulty. There may be no way down but that which involves suicide. Yet the man was determined to reach that elevation; nothing could stand between him and his wish; he urged God to grant him his request; with importunate desire he besought that he might have his own way; and there is no punishment heavier than that which falls upon any man when God allows him to take his own course. Terrible is the hour in which God says concerning any man, "Let him go." We cannot see it at first; we persuade ourselves that the highest success must be the result of this course or that, and we will not listen to the voice of God; we regard it as impracticable and deceptive, yet when we do take our course, and come to look at the results of our work, we find that having realized our own idea of honour, we have jeopardised or lost our souls.

The great lesson, then, which we have to learn from this text, and from all the applications to which we have now turned our attention, is to say from the heart, with trembling, yet earnest love, "Not our will but Thine be done." That is the lesson, but where is the school in which it can be learned? Is there such a school? Yes. The school in which this great lesson can be learned is called the CROSS! There is no other school in which this lesson is taught. Men may try to reason themselves into it; men may try by fine philosophy to come to a point of resignation that shall yield them high advantages; but all their labour will be in vain. We must be slain on the Saviour's Cross; we must enter fully into the pain which our Saviour endured; our hands and our feet must be nailed to the accursed, yet blessed tree; the very last desire of our selfishness must be extinguished, and then shall we come into the joy and the infinite peace of walking with God. Is there anything unreasonable in this? Anything derogatory to our dignity as human creatures? We resent the suggestion. There can only be one will that is infinite in wisdom; there can only be one absolute standard of goodness; by so much as Almighty God has any claim whatever to

be considered the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Preserver of the race, is He entitled, not to mere consultation, not to reluctant obedience, but to the profoundest and most loving homage of the heart. As to those of you who believe this doctrine thoroughly, and endeavour to live in its spirit, let me give to you a gentle and inspiring blessing. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him." Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and He will give thee thine heart's desire." It is true we have to wait; it is true that we have to find our way to rest often through many most humbling disappointments; but because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, we may be sure that the denial of our prayers is one of the Divine blessings which fall to our lot, and that when we perish in the outward man the inward man is blessed with the renewal which will be consummated in the imperishable and unmingled bliss of heaven. Learn to wait. The trial of patience is itself a blessing. To us, promptitude appears to be essential to satisfaction, but we know nothing of the true meaning of the word promptitude; we measure duration by our own standards of time, not by the solemnity and compass of eternity. Let us show that it is *God* whom we trust, by that reality of patience which is worthy of His infinite majesty. The desire of the humble He never puts to shame; the prayer of the lowly is never answered with dishonour. When the great blessings which are promised to patient saints are poured upon us, like a rain long-looked for, we shall see that our sorrow has passed like a short night, and that our joy is as the long summer day. Let us decline to be left to our own counsel,—let us charge our souls to wait only upon God!

City Temple Notes.

THE THURSDAY SERVICE AT THE POULTRY CHAPEL.

In answer to inquiries respecting this Service, it will save a good deal of correspondence to give a short account of its establishment. During my ministry in Cavendish Street Chapel, Manchester, I had often felt the importance of attempting to meet the spiritual wants of men engaged in business who could not, for good reasons, avail themselves of the customary week evening service in connection with their respective places of worship. In order, however, to meet the case satisfactorily, several concurring conditions are absolutely indispensable, and perhaps the chief of them is a place of worship so situated as to be within easy reach of all classes of the mercantile population. The comparatively small attendance of *men*, and especially of the higher class of merchants at week-evening prayer-meetings, has often been lamented; and yet, so practical are the difficulties in the way of increasing such attendance, that many pastors have dropped the subject even from their most zealous exhortations. I speak in the fear of God in saying that no conceivable invitation to undertake *merely the ordinary work of the pastorate* could have led me to relinquish my position in Manchester. Surrounded by men able to bring unusual resources of every kind to bear upon the projection and execution of the most important enterprises; placed in the heart of a great county; working in buildings confessedly the best in the Independent denomination; and supported by friendships which had been subjected to every test of sincerity during eleven years, the idea of separation could not be otherwise than most painful to me. If the affection of many hearts, a high degree of personal comfort, and many happy public relations, could alone have kept me in Manchester, no hesitation as to a decision could have arisen on my part. The circumstances, however, which gave distinctiveness to my invitation to London were quite unique—first, as officially explained by the friends who conveyed it, and secondly, as presenting themselves to my own mind. To be identified with the building of a large chapel in an easily accessible position in the metropolis, is to be charged with responsibilities which I would rather invite than decline. On this point more need not at present be said in this connection. The one hope that most deeply impressed itself upon me in connection with the present chapel was

the hope of establishing a midweek Service that should command the attention of the business men of London. That hope determined me to leave a sphere in which it was my intention to live and die. In no other English city than London could such a Service be carried on with effect. Every condition of success is found in the whole arrangements of metropolitan life. To-day we praise God for an extent of realization which is marvellous in our eyes. The fact that the Service never exceeds an hour in duration secures the attendance of men to whom time is important, and the fact that everything is intended to be practical appeals to the confidence of men who are thoroughly in earnest. At the Thursday Service all seats are free. Persons are at liberty to come into the chapel even for a few minutes. There is nothing formal or rigid in any part of the arrangements. Everything is adapted to the urgency of business life. These explanatory words will help all our readers to understand our position, and may possibly provoke other churches to make an effort in a similar direction. A great field is before us in this week-day work, and God will not deny the importunate prayers of many who are praying that the harvest may be very great.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, December 16th, 1869.

The service was commenced by the repetition of the following passages of Scripture :—

"Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth ?"

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly."

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart."

"Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

The Prayer.

Blessed Saviour, we worship Thee as our heart's one God. Without Thee we are incomplete ; nay, we are less than nothing ; we are shadows without a centre, we are voices of self-contradiction, without wisdom or truth ; but with Thee, and as interpreted by Thy love, we are sons of God, walking in heavenly light, and having resounding in our hearts most blessed promises. We humbly pray Thee to abide with us constantly as the Giver of our life, and the Supporter of our being ; show

Thyself unto us by day, flame forth upon us from every wayside bush, and make Thyself known unto us in the breaking of our daily bread. Make all common things symbols of high realities, and grant that in every event of life we may so plainly see Thine hand as to be led daily to profounder homage and tenderer love. May we in our life show by the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove, that our Instructor is God, and may God be glorified in us by reason of our holiness. We are not content with ourselves, we are sinners before Thee; God be merciful unto us sinners. O, Thou who dost cleanse man's sin by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, do Thou take away every stain of our guilt, and make us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; and grant that by our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may live a life that is hidden from the world, we may have meat to eat that the world knows not of, and in our broken heart do Thou set up Thy blessed Temple. Walk with us, abide with us, speak much to us by night and by day; come to us in the time of our sorrow, and do Thou attemper and chasten our joy. Give unto us life more and more abundantly; Thou hast no pleasure in death, Thy joy is to give eternal life; we have tasted of that life and would now eat and drink abundantly.

Holy Father, blessed Son of God, and coequal Spirit, dwell with us in ever increasing manifestation, show us the purity and love of God, and bless us with the promise of eternal life. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON CHRIST MANIFESTING HIMSELF.

"He that loveth me . . . . . I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. —John xiv. 21.

Here is a promise of Divine manifestation to the human mind, and of Divine indwelling in the human heart. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." So, then, God need not be unto the human soul as a far-off and unapproachable king—he may be in the heart as a gracious Father: his presence need not be as a coldly glittering star away in the inaccessible heights, but as a summer filling the heart with fire, working in the life all the strange enchantments of intermingling colours, and covering the soul with abundant fruitfulness Thus we have distinctly set before us the highest possibility in spiritual life—the possibility of being temples of the Holy Ghost, of having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and of being made partakers of the Divine nature. This thought should silence the clamour of all earthly appeal to our affections, and give us the true idea of our susceptibilities as children of God. We can do the daily business of life, yet through it all can have shining upon us the most holy and transfiguring image of the Son of man; we can be in the city of men, yet hidden in the sanctuary of God; our feet may be in the dust, but our heads among those who worship day and night; we may carry with us Him whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God. So being and so doing we are no longer of the world; we are only waiting to pay it back the dust it lent us, and then we shall be free of it for ever; our true life is hidden; it is in God's keeping; it is never seen drawing water from this world's muddy wells, nor eating the base food of the beasts that perish; it lives on the living word, it draws water from the wells of salvation; it has meat to eat that the world knoweth not of. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church"—and I invite you to follow me, in a prayerful and quiet spirit, in an endeavour to show first the *condition* on

which Divine manifestation is granted; and, secondly, some of the blessed *evidences* by which we may know that such manifestation has been realized in our own experience. O Spirit of Light, shine upon us, that we may see every step of the ascending and glorious way!

I. The *condition* on which Divine manifestation is granted to man.

That condition is distinctly asserted in the text, and in other Scriptures, to be *love*. "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me." "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." Where *love* is wanting, all is wanting; there may be rough interpretations of the Divine presence as seen in the wonders of creation; for he would be a fool who could mistake the sun as having been written by any other hand than God's; he who reads only the writing on the face of nature is as the letter-carrier, who reads only the outward address, not the wise and tender words written for the heart. Love is, so to speak, the faculty by which we apprehend God, without which we can never know more of Him than that He is a dread mystery. Love is the fulfilling of the law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength. Nor need it appear strange that love is the only interpreter of God. In all our education and intercourse we find again and again that love sees farthest, hears quickest, feels deepest. God has not set up an arbitrary test of manifestation, He has taken the common course of our life, and given it applications to Himself. I might challenge the worshipper of *Nature* to say whether his god does not demand precisely the same condition of manifestation? The mountain is saying, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him; the sun holds the same language, so does the sea, so does every leaf of the forest. Two men shall walk along the same road; the one shall see nothing of beauty, and hear nothing of music; when he reaches his journey's end, he may, perhaps, have a dim impression that there was a hedge on one side of him, and that there was garden land on the other, he may not be prepared absolutely to deny that a bird or two might have been singing in the air as he came along, he may not be ready to take an oath that now and again he passed a wayside flower; but he knows nothing, he is not in the slightest degree enriched by reason of his walk through the enchanting scenery; to such an eye as his, Nature refuses to reveal herself in any but her most outward forms, and even they are misunderstood by so blind a reader; the companion who walked with him has, on the contrary, enriched his mind with many a picture, he has heard voices which will linger in his ear for many a day, the wayside flower has spoken to him some tender message, and the whole scene has been to him as the distinct handwriting of the great

Creator. How are we to account for the difference? The road was the same, the two men travelled the same path at the same moment, yet the one was poor at his journey's end, and the other was filled with a sweet delight; the explanation is easy: the one loved Nature, and therefore Nature manifested herself to his admiring eye; the other cared nothing for Nature, and Nature in return cared nothing for him. What I wish to insist upon is, that even in your sanctuary, O worshipper of Nature, the same law holds good as in the sanctuary of the living God; in both we hear the words, "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." The same rule holds good with *Art*. Every great picture is saying to those who look upon it, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him. It is not every man who can read a picture. To some men a picture is only so much canvas and so much paint, without life, without idea, without poetry; there the great work hangs, having no message to those who look upon it with unappreciative eyes. You have heard persons who knew nothing of works of art, who, in passing great pictures, have said, "That is not so bad," or, "What a glorious *frame* that is!" but into the soul of the painter they have not seen at all; they have not appreciated the expenditure of mind and soul which has been lavished on that costly work. On the other hand, there have been men who have stood before a great picture dumb with amazement, quivering with inexpressible delight, moved to the very depths of their being! The picture is the same, the light in which it is viewed by both parties is the same; yet to the one mind the picture is representing truths too deep for utterance, and to the other nothing but the coarsest exterior. Here again, therefore, we are thrown back upon the law of the text, and are shown that it is no arbitrary law which Almighty God has set up: Art unites with Nature in saying in the most distinct manner, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him. Nor do we come to a change of this law if we enter into the circle in which human nature is most deeply studied. You can never know a man deeply until you love him. If you wish to know what is in your friend, sound his depths by entrusting him with more and more of your friendship. As flowers expand in the sunshine, so character discloses itself under the genial radiance of trustful affection. All character, indeed, does not reveal itself in the same way, but some men, and probably the grandest men, do not show themselves fully except under the influence of love. We may make many happy conjectures concerning the disposition of men; by putting one thing and another together which we may have seen in their character, we may come to some tolerably correct conclusion regarding the life of those whom we carefully study; but to know a man deeply and truly,

to know him as he knows himself, we must test him by our own love, we must develop him by the fulness and reality of our special trust. The mother often knows more about the child than the father does. You may remember that in your childish days you were able to go to your mother with a very broken story, and she was patient and wise enough to put it together for you and make something of it; but you did not care to go to your father until you had a straightforward story to tell, and were prepared to stand a close cross-examination upon it. Perhaps some girl will mentally interrupt me here, and say that in her case it was precisely the contrary, for she could go to her father better than to her mother; I am glad to know it; such an instance does not at all destroy the validity of my position; it still remains true that where there is the most love there will be the highest power of interpretation, and that love will draw from its object most surely all that it requires. What we have found in Nature, in art, and in the human circle, we find in the whole course of our general study. The poet is saying, If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him. He will not speak to the prosaic reader. His poem will be but so many lines to the man who has no poetic faculty. The poet will only speak to the poet. Two men shall read the same poem—one will feel it tedious and wearisome exceedingly, the other will feel as if it ended too soon—so rich, so inspiring, so grand he felt it to be. What is this but the application of the principle of the text? So with the *musician:* to some men (men, indeed, who are to be sincerely pitied) music is nothing; it does not come to them with interpretations which could never be expressed in common words; they are lost in what, to them, is a terrible discord—the clash of instruments, the throbbing of great drums, the roll of stupendous organs, the blending of many voices—to them it is all confusion, without spirit, without figure, without signification. To others, music is as a voice from heaven: in the grand compositions of the masters they see as it were the very spirit of music walking upon the wings of the tuneful wind, and beckoning them away to higher scenes and nobler delights than earth can afford. How is this? Music will not visit the silent chambers of the soul that gives it no loving invitation; music, on the contrary, will never cease to sound in the hearing of those who pray that her voice may continue to soothe and inspire them. We come, therefore, again and again upon the principle of the text. Whatever be your god—be it Nature, be it Art, be it humanity, you will find in it the same law that you find in the text, namely, that without love there can be no true manifestation. It is the same with reading books. All authors are not the same to us; we must take something to an author before we can get from him all that he will give.

The Stones of Venice must be hard reading to a man who cares nothing for gothic, byzantine, bases, jambs, and archivolts ; Shakespeare is uninteresting to the man who brings nothing of the dramatic in his own nature to the interpretation of the great poet ; such a man will flee to Euclid's Geometry, as to an ark of refuge. Yes, even geometry itself insists upon the application of the law which we find in the text. Euclid is dull reading to the man who does not love mathematics ; but to him who has, so to speak, a geometrical mind, even straight lines and circles are apt to become things of beauty. You will not regard these illustrations as tedious if they help you in any degree to realize the principle, that love is the secret of manifestation. In setting up love as the condition of Divine fellowship, God does not set up an arbitrary law. This, indeed, is the common law of the universe. Like ever goes to like. He who loves the Devil most, knows most of the Devil. To love vice is to be a learned scholar in the school of the infernal spirit; is to be really clever at wickedness, to be refined in iniquity, to be a genius in abomination. Some men are so little learned in the arts of the Devil as to expose themselves to the interference of the policeman and the magistrate ; they are such clumsy servants of their bad master as actually to be imprisoned, and to be otherwise punished by the laws of their country ; others, again, are such adepts in the art of doing that which is forbidden, that they can manage to build up a reputation for respectability while they are actually engaged in practices which cannot bear the light of day,—so silent are they, so skilful, so deeply do they love the Devil, that they receive from him the most secret manifestations, whilst they can look abroad upon the world with a face which simulates the appearance of innocence. The law is impartial. To love is to know ; to love is to have ; to love is strength ; to love is life.

II. I intended to say something about the blessed evidences that we have realized this Divine manifestation ; but why attempt to explain what must of necessity be too great for utterance in words ? When God is showing Himself in the heart, there are many signs of His presence. In our deepest intercourse with the Father our souls enter into an ecstasy in which language is felt to be powerless. You cannot have God in your heart without knowing that He is there. You cannot always explain, in common language, how it is that you are assured of His presence ; yet there are flashes of light upon your mind, there are surgings of love in your heart, which tell you most unmistakeably that you are enjoying immediate fellowship with the Father and His Christ. If I were to enter into an enumeration of the evidences by which any man can be assured that God is manifesting Himself to the human heart, I

should put, first and foremost, this—namely, where God dwells there will be *increasing hatred of sin as sin.* I do not say that there will be mere dread of consequences; I do not teach that men will avoid sin simply because they fear the terrible rod which never fails to follow the evil-doer. I insist rather, that where God is reigning in the heart there will be an ever-deepening detestation of sin on its own account; of sin because it *is* sin, because it is so infinitely hateful to God Himself. Where the spirit of order is in a man, he does not require to go with a square and compasses, and other mathematical instruments, in order to test whether this or that is out of order, or out of proportion; he detects it instantly, by reason of the very spirit that is in him. Where the spirit of honesty is in a man, he does not retire in order to consult an act of Parliament before he completes his transactions with those who have entered into business relations with him. He does not say, "If the act will allow me to get off for 11¾d., certainly I shall not pay 1s.; he is himself an act of Parliament; he is the incarnation of the spirit of honesty—he represents the great law of Divine righteousness, and because of the *spirit* of integrity which is in him, it is utterly impossible for him to go astray from the path of rectitude. And even thus it is with regard to the very highest attainments of the Divine life; when the spirit of *holiness* is in a man, his whole life will be made holy thereby; he will not care to consult rules and codes as determined by human critics; the spirit of holiness that is in him will lead him into truth, into purity, into the very holiness of the all-holy God. Let us then put ourselves to the test on this point; if we would really know whether God is manifesting Himself to us, let us each say, Do I hate sin as sin, or would I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel if I could do so without suffering evil consequences for it; do I abominate sin because it is opposed to the nature of God, or do I profess to hate it merely because such profession will secure for me a better standing in society? Would I sin if I were left alone, or if the most perfect secrecy could be granted to me? These are the piercing questions by which a man may test whether he is really enjoying Divine manifestation or is living a superficial and perhaps a hypocritical life. Next to insisting upon this proof of Divine manifestation to the human heart, I should point out that where God really dwells with men there will be on the part of men *supremacy of the spiritual over the material.* The flesh will be servant, not master. Christianity indeed does not destroy human passions, but gives them a higher direction. Where God dwells in the soul, and fills the mind with heavenly light, and stirs the heart with blessed expectation, the passions will, of necessity, take their order from reason. As the material universe is under God's control, so will the human body be under the

control of the human spirit, where God dwells in the heart. As in nature we find occasional outbreakings of storm—as the winds now and again threaten to rock the world and shake it out of its place—as the volcano bursts forth in devastating fire—as the sea roars tumultuously, so there may be in our bodily experiences proofs that we are yet in a region where the enemy has some power over us; yet as God sits above the floods, and controls all the forces of creation, so will He give our spirit ability to overmaster all the agitation and turbulence which show that even yet we are more or less strangers in a strange land. Out of this hatred of sin and this spiritual supremacy, there will, of course, come perfect trust in God's government of the world. The world becomes quite a new study when the heart is renewed in Christ's love. The world is no longer a threatening mystery; it is still, indeed, a problem, but there is the most perfect assurance in the heart that the solution will bring nothing but glory to the Divine name. When God manifests Himself to man, man is delivered from the terrors of the present world; he ceases to see mere accident in the courses of daily life that perplex him and distress him; he says, I do but see part of the Divine movement in this; so far as these events that appear to be disastrous are concerned, I see that which is fragmentary, and I must patiently and confidently wait until God has completed His whole purpose. This is a sure sign that God is in the heart, for the world is displaced, its power is thrown down, and, even in the most threatening circumstances, there is a calmness which was never wrought in the human mind by carnal philosophy or unassisted reasoning. The world becomes less and less to a man who enjoys Divine fellowship. To some men the world is, of course, everything; they have but one little world in their tiny universe—of course they are bound to make the most of it; to the man who is the temple of the Holy Ghost there is a great, and indeed immeasurable universe, in view of which this speck of dust, on which some men would live for ever, dwindles into its proper insignificance. The Christian and the worldling are not, as they ought not to be, able to look upon the events of life with the same composure. The worldling must, of necessity, live in a constant state of alarm, because he is exposed to the mercy of what he calls accident, chance, misfortune. The Christian, on the other hand, by reason of taking wide views of things, by reason of associating himself with that which is infinite and absolute, enters into a profound and imperturbable peace. Yes, this peace is a sure sign that God is revealing Himself to the heart. Where grace is, there will be the most blessed peace. "Great peace have they that love Thy law." The Lord will bless His people with peace.

My brother, art thou in search of the Holy Grail? Here it is. "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." Hast thou been on the holy quest in many countries? Pause. The answer is here, "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." After many heartaches, many blighting disappointments, many cruel mockings, art thou still sighing for the Holy Sangreal? I have the answer, "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." We must begin with love, the love which comes of earnest *desire* to know that which is heavenly, and then, in due time, will come a still tenderer affection. We must get to the point of love. All our self-sufficiency, all our high notions, and mighty imaginings, must be cast away as things unclean and unsatisfying, and then we shall see the Father. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Love is the brightest purity. Purity is the divinest love. I cannot tell you how wondrously God reveals Himself to love! He can never do enough for it! It moves Him to lavish upon us unsearchable riches! Nor is love on our part a fixed quantity; we may grow in love for ever, constantly going out after God, never exhausting His grace, yet ever increasing in capacity to receive it. As for *your* god, O ye idolaters of Mammon, your love is a vanishing quantity, though it may appear to increase; you are daily impairing your very power to love; you are letting your greedy god eat up your hearts, and yet suffering him to delude you with the notion that you are independent and high-minded thinkers. Mammon! accursed god! never satisfied, never thankful, never beneficent, thou dost slay all to whom thou dost reveal thyself! Men of business, let me warn you against this flattering and mocking money-god; he will deceive you at last; he will stir you with most exciting promises—he will show you the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; he will throw open the doors of enchanting palaces, and give you visions of temples in which all is golden—but at last he will laugh you to scorn! Yes; he will surely *reveal* himself to you; he will grin as devils only can grin; and when you see him as he is you shall be *like* him. Blessed are they who have turned with loathing from his jewelled altars, and sought the Sangreal in the blessed Cross! Blessed is their life—blessed is their peace—blessed is their hope. Daily they draw themselves through the discipline of earth, by the inspiring expectation of heaven, and by the sweetness of grace they overcome the bitterness of sin.

Concluding Prayer.

Blessed Father, again we seek Thy face. Nothing less will satisfy our heart's desire. Show Thyself to our inmost thoughts, and give us glimpses of Thy beauty when our eyes are wearied by this world's wasteful and mocking fascinations Make Thyself specially known to us in our ever-increasing holiness; when we are holy as Thou art holy, then shall we know of a truth that we have fellowship with the Father. Help us also to hold spiritual dominion over the flesh; may we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, and hold in constant sacrifice the powers and desires of the body. A sight of Thee will be more than heaven to our souls. Thy presence will turn our night into day; Thy voice will reduce to harmony the discords of a life which is full of trouble We wait for Thee. Our love watches with joyful eagerness for every sign of Thy drawing nigh; our heart is as a prepared guest-chamber awaiting Thine arrival. O that Thou mightest come quickly, and bless us with a gracious surprise! We will expect Thee: our eyes shall turn heavenward: we will promise our hearts an early visit of Thy love: men shall know that we wait for the living God. Do Thou keep our souls in the assurance of Thy presence, and care, and infinite mercy: so shall we escape all the vain disquietudes of life. If Thou dost forget us, our day becomes night; when Thou dost remember us, the darkness of the night cannot hide the glory of Thy face from us. If for a small moment Thou dost forsake us, it is that Thou mayest cover us with everlasting mercies. Thou canst not utterly cast us off. Thou comest into us with renewed tokens of Thy favour, and Thy momentary absence is forgotten in the overflowing fulness of Thy blessing. We ourselves have had our dark hours and our troubled days. Sometimes we have been thrust down into great gloom; we have not heard the going of the Lord in all the way of our life; we have sat in an afflicted silence, not knowing what Thou wast about to do. Yet hast Thou proved Thyself, in the extremity of our wonder and anxiety, the help of our countenance and our joy. When scornful men were asking us, "Where is now thy God?" Thou hast come to us with all the comfort and consolation of Thy grace. We will remember

these things in the days to come. We will not be driven about by every wind. We will know of a surety that our feet are established upon a rock, and that Thou wilt return unto us with all the brightness and joy of Thy perfect power. We beseech Thee to give us such realization of Thy presence in our life as shall save us from distrust, as shall deliver us from unbelief, and as shall give us steadiness of mind, constancy of heart, and determination of will, in all that pertains to our lot. If Thou dost chastise, it is that Thou mayest draw us more closely to Thyself. If Thou dost impoverish us, it is that Thou mayest make us rich with riches which no thief can take away. When Thou dost cast us down, it is that Thou mayest lift us up with an exaltation that shall never decline. Help us to believe these things, and we shall be strong. Help us to see Thine own Hand in all the growth of our life, in all the shaping of our course, and whether it be light or darkness round about us, we shall hope steadfastly in God. Thou knowest Thy purpose concerning us; Thou knowest wherefore Thou hast called us into our several positions in life; Thou knowest the measure of our power and the number of our faculties, our capabilities of service and of endurance, and if we put ourselves into Thy hands, Thou wilt surely deal graciously with us; Thou wilt multiply the power which we seek to use well, and wilt crown our life with Thine own benediction. If for a moment we have been tempted to distrust Thee, Thou hast tormented our soul because of the changefulness of our love. We bless Thee for all the torment we have suffered, in so far as it has recovered us to allegiance to Thy covenant, and brought us in supplication and penitential crying before the throne of Thy mercy. When we have taken our life into our own keeping, Thou hast confounded our purposes, and turned our wisdom into folly, and made us see how little we are; but when we have abased ourselves, and received our law at Thy lips, and done according to Thy commandments, Thou hast made us great in power. Thou hast enabled us to put a thousand to flight, and in our weakness Thou hast magnified Thy great strength. Keep us lowly in heart; may we be meek in spirit, having no confidence in ourselves, but having perfect trust in God. So shall our way be opened before us, and men shall be given to know that the God whom we serve is ever at our right hand. Amen.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, December 23rd, 1869.

After singing a hymn, the following passages of Scripture were read:—

"Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

The Prayer.

Blessed Saviour, Thou wast born unto us, may we be born unto Thee. As there was joy on earth when it was said that unto us a Son was born, so may there be joy in heaven when it is said that we have been made by Thee sons of God. We would that Thou wert born in us the hope of glory. We are begotten not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. In Thy life we live—in Thy eternity we find our immortality. We bless Thee for having been born in the likeness of men, for coming near us, for all the untold and inexhaustible blessing of Thy presence in our daily lives. Thou wast born that we might be born: Thou didst become a man, that our manhood might not be lost: Thou didst come to earth that we might ascend to Heaven. Blessed One, Anointed of God, Thou didst become our omnipotent and ever-gracious Saviour, and we praise Thee with our whole heart. We are safe because of Thine

almightiness; our peace is assured by Thy rest; our song will remain because Thy joy is eternal. Make us glad in this hiding-place, may the world not come within these walls, may we feel very near Thyself, and know Thy nearness by the purity and depth of our heavenly joy. Creator, Redeemer, Spirit, dwell with us evermore. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON THE PRIVATE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL.

Let us read together part of the first chapter of the Gospel by John, commencing at the forty-fifth verse, and pausing to gather up such thoughts as may be suggested by the Inspirer of the graphic and stimulating incident:—

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Do you know how difficult it is to preach to *one* hearer? I dare say some of you young people who have a wish to be public speakers, wonder how a man can stand before a thousand of his fellow-creatures and speak to them boldly, with perfect self-possession and confidence. Believe me, there is a higher courage than this; namely, to speak to *one* man about Jesus, to direct your remarks to one heart, and to press your urgent appeal upon the individual conscience. Philip spoke to Nathanael, and in this fact I find an illustration of what may be called the *Private Ministry* of the Gospel—a ministry between one man and another—a ministry between friend and friend—and, I may add, a ministry peculiarly suitable to this festive season, at which Christian civilization yields itself to the spell of a special joy. To this higher courage we are all called—to this private and direct ministry we are impelled by our own thankfulness for a revelation of the Son of God; let us, therefore, endeavour to discover the basis and the method of this lofty and most blessed vocation.

I. The Christian Minister has a Distinct Message to deliver to the World.

Philip delivered such a message to Nathanael: "We have found Him

of whom Moses in the law of the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." The Christian Ministry takes its stand upon *facts*. We are not sent to conceive a theory to account for circumstances that are around us; we have not to strain our minds to work out a speculation or to elaborate an argument; we have nothing to do with dreaming or supposition; fancy is not our business; first of all, midst of all, and last of all, we have to deal with *facts*. The Christian teacher takes his stand upon a historic rock, and only as he does so is he safe. Clearing the ground of everything, we point the inquirer in the first instance to facts: Jesus Christ was born, Jesus Christ lived, taught, died, rose again,—that is our historic outline, and we risk everything upon it; then we proceed to show that this historic outline has come out of a grand system of preparation, of prophecy, of holy service as ordained of God. Nothing else so completely, so graciously, and so gloriously meets all the points and designs of that initial system, so we do not hesitate to identify all the divine elements of human history with the person and work of Jesus Christ, and to claim for him the title of Saviour and the throne of the One true King. Not only so. To have the *facts* is one thing, but something more is required. Philip did not say, Jesus Christ *has been found;* he said, *We* have found Him. He himself sustained a *personal* relation to those facts, and this relation was the secret of his power In a mighty ministry we find not only high intellectual, but also high emotional power; the heart gives fire to the thought. No man can preach with the truest success if he only *knows* the facts; he must *feel* them as well as know them, and then his tongue will not fail for words that find the hearts of others. Every preacher, private or public, must, so to speak, individualise the Gospel, must *himself* represent the truths which he seeks to teach, and by so much his ministry will address itself to the deepest life of those who hear him. *Know* the Gospel if you would formally teach it; but *love* the Gospel if you would teach it with triumphant and blessed effect. Truly, no man *knows* the Gospel, except as he *loves* it. To know *about* it is one thing; to have it reigning in the heart is another. It may be replied that it is not everything to know the mere *facts* of the Gospel, and so it is undoubtedly, if you use the term "know" in its most insufficient acceptation; but as intended to be applied by me at this moment, the term includes, not only the assent of the mind, but the loving and undivided homage of the heart. We may know that a certain man has arrived in London, and the knowledge may fail to excite a single sensation in our nature; but to those who have been expecting and longing for him with most loving desire, his arrival is a blessing which fills them with thankfulness and joy. So with Christ. We have

been seeking Him, waiting for Him, crying to God for the coming of His blessed presence, and to-day the fact that we have found Him causes us joy inexpressible and full of glory.

If the Church would be strong in her doctrines, she must be strong in her facts. When she gets away from facts, she gets into dangerous waters. I have no fear of speculation or of controversy so long as there is a clear and grateful recognition of facts. We may be trusted to speculate so long as we are sure of the foundations; but if we trifle with the rock, we shall be the sport of the wildest dreaming, intoxicated with our supposed independence, whilst the fetters of a cruel slavery are being bound upon our feet.

II. In Delivering His Message the Christian Minister will Encounter Opposition.

Nathanael said to Philip, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? This is opposition. We shall encounter opposition of various kinds. The worldly-minded hearer will say, "I have enough to do in getting my daily bread. I have no trust for spiritual concerns—away with your preaching and dreaming, and let me make the best of the present life." The speculative hearer will invite to controversy; he will urge objection after objection; it is not in his ethereal and sublime nature to trifle away his time in reading history and considering facts; he lives on wings, he soars through the courses of the light, and inquires in the upper circles of fancy. He says, "Away with your historic realities and your personal appearances; answer the wonders of my imagination, and satisfy the demands of my curiosity. I care not for your dry and barren facts." All ministers have met such opposition, and it has often been a hindrance to their ministry; but there is a deadlier opposition than this! It is possible to drag the worldly-minded man from the altar of his dust-god, and to persuade him to think of higher concerns; possible to break the awful dominion of Mammon, and to liberate a slave now and then at least; it is possible, also, to teach the speculator to be sober in his claims, to descend from his aërial car, and to look at events with the eye of temperate reason. But who can destroy the power of *prejudice?* Can you *define* prejudice? You can give me a derivation, but can you give me a definition? What is prejudice, where does it begin, how does it work, where does it end? You may have *felt* it, but can you *describe* it—*define* it? Take a prejudice against a man, and he can never more do right in your eyes; you will see a colour upon his purest deed, you will see a twist in his straightest course, you will see a taint in his holiest motives. Take a prejudice against a

minister, and though he gives his days to study and his nights to prayer, though every word be tried as men try fine gold, yet you will shudder at his presence, you will hear blasphemy in his prayers, you will see hypocrisy in his appeals. Prejudice! What is prejudice? A devil without figure, without address, without anything to lay hold upon,—ever active, never visible; always at hand, yet always in secret,—a damnable and cruel force, yet hidden under a guise of respectability. Give a prejudiced man an anonymous book, he may read it with delight, he may exclaim by reason of joyous appreciation—hear him! "What exquisite diction! What splendid painting! What gorgeous fancy! What ruthless logic,—a grand and precious book!" Ask him—"Do you know who wrote it?" He answers, *No.* Tell him that it was written by the man against whom he is so prejudiced, and see the change. "Oh!" says he, "I spoke under excitement,—I had no time to form a deliberate opinion,—I spoke off-handedly; now that I look at the thing quietly, there is really nothing in it; it is exaggerated, turbid, artificial; it is shallow in conception, and poor in execution." Yes, he will say all that. Yes, he is willing to be called a *fool* rather than give credit to the man whom he dislikes. Such is prejudice,—yet what is prejudice? See it in the blinking of a wicked eye,—see it in the curl of a bitter sneer,—hear it in a subtly varied tone,—yet what is it? *Define* it, *describe* it, set it before us, that we may see its hideousness, and hate it with all our heart!

Brethren, let us beware of prejudice! Dislike a man, dislike his looks, dislike his works, dislike the very ground on which he walks—but don't give way to prejudice against Jesus Christ. Nathanael spoke of Nazareth, and could not believe that any good could come out of it. Prejudice may work in us also. Christianity awakens all kinds of prejudice,—prejudice of birth, of position, of education, of earthly taste: the manger, the homelessness, the cross, all awaken prejudice; and prejudice may lead to our damnation. Plain words,—yes, plain, because ruin should never be decorated, hell should never be decked with tempting flowers.

III. The Christian Minister has a Most Practical Answer to all Objections.

The answer of Philip was, Come and see. When men are thoroughly in earnest they return these short, cutting replies to unexpected questions. Had Philip retired to consider the best possible answer to the objections urged by Nathanael, probably he might have written something that would have had the appearance of argument and conclusiveness;

instead of that, he spoke out of the holy excitement of his heart, and returned the best answer which could possibly be given to a suggestion such as Nathanael's. We do occasionally almost reach the point of inspiration when we are engaged in the blessed service of the Son of God; questions that would puzzle us in our cooler moments seem to be easy of settlement when we are full of the spirit of our work; it is given unto us in the same hour what we shall say unto men, and oftentimes we ourselves are as much surprised at the answer as are those to whom it is directed. I wish to point out in this connection that Philip returned, not a speculative, but a practical answer, to the objection of Nathanael. "Come and see" is a better reply than "Let us reason upon the subject." Philip might have invited Nathanael to a long contention about the unreasonableness of prejudice, and might have shown him by many instances that prejudice has often prevented men from reaching sound and satisfactory conclusions on many questions in common life. Instead of taking this roundabout course, he appealed to his interlocutor to come and see the Saviour for himself. Yes, let that be observed; it was to the Saviour that Philip sought to draw Nathanael. Let us be careful how we employ this expression, "Come and see;" it is not come and see *the Church;* alas! it is possible for men to look at the Church, and to feel a sense of something like disgust in relation to the doctrines which that Church professedly embodies; in the Church there are wars and dissensions, there are evil controversies which vex the heart and show themselves in the perverseness of life; in the Church one teacher contradicts another; one sect brandishes its chosen weapon in the face of another; and there is much that looks like contradiction in the outworking of ecclesiastical principles and relationships. A man must be a very good man indeed before he can quite understand the working of Church organizations. It is only after he has held long and sweet intercourse with Christ that he is enabled to look upon discrepancies, and to regard clamours in their true light. Observe, too, that we are not at liberty to urge men to come and see *our literature:* if a man should be a very good man indeed before he can be trusted to look upon the Church as an institution, he ought to be almost an angel before he be invited to form an opinion about much of our literature. We who are already engaged in the production and circulation of that literature, may know how to estimate its excellencies; we can make allowance because of our knowledge of the general character of those who are concerned in that literature; but for a young inquiring Christian to look upon it, the probability would be, that by the brawling, the misinterpretation, the censoriousness of which he might discover traces, his heart might be turned away from those great principles in which alone he could find salvation. Nor are we at liberty to

say to the Nathanaels of our own age, Come and see *the preacher*. No one preacher can preach the Gospel in all its fulness and with all its sweetness. The true preacher of Jesus Christ is not one man, but the whole *ministry* of the Gospel. Individual men excel in special departments—one is mighty in controversy, another is tender in appeal, a third is impressive in worship, a fourth is exact in criticism ; but if we would know what the Gospel is in its entireness (if that be possible on earth), we must hear all the servants of Jesus Christ, and regard their teaching as one grand exhibition of Divine truth. We are not at liberty to set one preacher against another as the man who alone represents Jesus Christ and His truth. We must go beyond the servant, and show the inquirer the Lord Himself. Philip invited Nathanael to see Jesus Christ, not to look at the disciples, but to look at the Master. This is, above all things, what we desire. Once get men thoroughly to study Jesus Christ Himself, and there can be little or no doubt of the result. We invite you to put aside everything that you may have heard *about* Christ. We encourage you in the meantime to set aside all early association and all pre-conceived opinion, and to go to the Gospels in which the story of Jesus Christ is detailed, and to read solemnly and continuously what is said about Him by the inspired writers. Nay, if possible, get beyond the reading into the spirit. And what will the consequence be ? I say it with gratitude and joy, that never did I know a single case in which an inquirer deeply studied the life of Jesus Christ, without rising from its perusal with admiration, thankfulness, and delight. But to know what Jesus Christ really is, we must go to Him when we need Him most. We may go to Him in our speculative moods, and He may be to us silent ; we may go to Him merely for the sake of making of His principles a momentary convenience, and we may be driven to pronounce them insufficient ; but when we go to Him in sin and in penitence for our transgressions, and with an earnest loving heart beseech Him to show Himself unto us, we are never left in doubt of His omnipotence and graciousness. I would charge it upon myself as upon you who preach the Gospel, either privately or publicly, that we are bound to urge men to come and see the Saviour Himself. This is our blessed ministry. We have a short message to the world. We have a decisive answer to objections—we have to hide ourselves in the glory of our Master.

IV. When the Practical Answer of the Christian Minister is Received, the most Blessed Results are Realized.

We have just heard Nathanael say, Can any good thing come out of

Nazareth : he has accepted the invitation of Philip to see the Saviour for himself, and now what does he say ? Hear his wonderful exclamation : "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God ; Thou art the King of Israel." Look at the extreme points of this experience of Nathanael. At the beginning he puts the question of prejudice ; he shows himself to be narrow-minded, exclusive, and childish—at the end he expands into a noble and magnanimous character. It is even so with all men who stand afar off from Jesus Christ, and trouble themselves about questions of absolutely no importance. So long as they look at places and at merely incidental circumstances, they quibble and contend in unworthy strife of words ; but as soon as they go to the Saviour and see Him as He really is, they forget, in their glowing delight, the prejudices of earlier inquiry. And how did Nathanael come to this decision concerning the Person of Jesus Christ? Whilst Nathanael was approaching, Jesus Christ said to those who were round about, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile" He gave Nathanael at once to feel that he was fully abreast of his history, that He knew him altogether, and that He could instantly commence conversation on the profoundest themes. This is the great power which Jesus Christ has over all men. He asks us no questions concerning our antecedents. He is not dependent upon our answers for His knowledge of the state of our minds ; before we speak to Him He reads our heart in its deepest experiences ; there is not a phase of our being on which He has not looked ; and I take you to witness that you have never gone to the New Testament without finding in it a spirit of judgment that instantly called up your whole life, and commented correctly upon its moral value. How intense must have been the joy of Philip, as he stood aside and watched the progress of this interview ! We who are ministers of the Cross have had similar joy in the course of our ministry ; we have seen man after man give up his prejudices in exchange for loving homage and life-long consecration. We have felt the blessedness of being enabled to turn men away from ourselves, and to fix their attention upon Jesus Christ. If it had been required of us to answer all their questions, to remove all their prejudices, and to satisfy all their curiosity, we should undoubtedly have failed in our means ; but we have felt ourselves to be but called upon to point to the Lamb of God ; the question was not to rest with ourselves ; we said to those who came to us with prejudices and with difficulties, all things are possible with God—take all these to Him, lay them before Him just as they affect your own heart, and see whether the light of His countenance cannot dispel the clouds which intervene between yourselves and the infinite beauty. I would press it upon all ministers of the Gospel, upon all

missionaries of the Cross, upon all who teach the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, that in the long run we shall have a joy such as Philip had when he saw the prejudiced man become the enraptured worshipper. We have our difficulties, our discouragements now; often we feel as if the work were perishing in our hands; again and again it seems as if the prejudices of the world were too strong for us; yet there are times when we see those prejudices so manifestly dissipated, and objections so clearly confounded, as to leave no doubt upon our minds that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that He can do for all men what He did so graciously in the case of Nathanael. I am only afraid that in some of our cases we take too much upon ourselves in the way of answering objection. It is quite possible for controversy to become a temptation to the Christian teacher. He may imagine that by careful and urgent argument he may be able to counteract prejudice and to put men in a right state of thinking. I am more and more convinced that our safety and our success in this work, to which our lives have been committed, depends entirely upon our distrust of all that is merely human. Insist upon men going to Jesus Christ and obtaining a personal interview with Him. Risk the results of your ministry upon a thorough scrutiny of the life of Jesus Christ as presented in the four gospels. Protest against any man raising questions outside that life until he has at least made himself master of all its details as given in the New Testament. We are bound to see that no trespass is made. As soon as the inquirer has really exhausted the Gospel narrative and made himself acquainted with the spirit and scope of Jesus Christ's ministry, he may be permitted to go into abstract questions in theology; but first of all, and until he has completely succeeded, he must be shut up within the limits of Jesus Christ's personal life and ministry upon the earth. I do not know why I should hesitate to say that Jesus Christ's life becomes to me a new life every day. According to my increasing capacity does the revelation of His truth and beauty increase upon me. To the little child Jesus himself is still a babe, and to the most mature thinker Jesus Christ stands in the relation of an all-sufficient Teacher. Herein is the surpassing wonderfulness of this unique life. We can never exhaust it; it grows with our growth; the light increases with our power of vision; and we never find the end of the perfection of the Son of God. I think that these personal testimonies ought to be considered as of some value. I do not ask you now to follow me in any course of abstract argument in proof of these things; I choose rather in the spirit of the text to put my own personal experience and conclusions before you, and to testify these things in my own name.

Does any man who now hears me say that he feels himself in the

position of Nathanael simply waiting to be called to see Jesus Christ? Hear me, then — from this moment your plea is gone! Never repeat that excuse. In the presence of God and of His holy angels, I now take it upon me to stand to you in the relation of Philip, and to call upon you to come and see for yourselves Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write. Let there be no misunderstanding upon this matter, because I intend to break up your self-excusing, and to leave you without ground of delay. To-day you hear the invitation: it is for you to reply; but whether you reply or not, the plea that you are simply waiting to be called is now and for ever removed. Perhaps, however, you are saying that you do not wait to be addressed simply as a member of a large congregation, but you wish to be privately spoken to, so that you may put before the speaker your personal difficulties whatever, they be. Let me remind you of a fact in connection with this story of Nathanael which ought to save you from the consequences of such pleading: "Before that Philip called thee when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." You need not wait for the servant when the eye of the Master is already upon you. The very fact that He is looking at you should constitute the most potent appeal that can be addressed to your spiritual nature. It is our joy to preach that Jesus Christ is still with His disciples, that they never work alone, that He goes with them confirming their words, and in many ways displaying the effect of His presence. If I now address any man who is in secret making inquiries regarding the Christian life, or who is feeling the pressure of any special temptation to turn away from religious pursuits, I would urge upon him the truth that Jesus Christ Himself is looking into the very depths of his nature, and is waiting to meet all the hunger of his heart with all the sufficiency of grace. Remember that Jesus Christ is the minister of His own Gospel, and that even though no servant of His may ever speak to us directly in His name, He himself is causing to operate upon us influences without number, which we may often mistake for the agencies of ordinary life. The fact that Jesus Christ sees us as He saw Nathanael in solitude, and that He knows our heart-aching and deep desire, should draw us towards Himself in reverent inquiry and tender love.

The reply which Jesus Christ made to Nathanael gives us a hint of the ever-expanding sufficiency and glory of Christian truth;—with a tone that had in it somewhat of surprise, Jesus Christ said to Nathanael, Because I said unto thee I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? And then He added, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." Jesus Christ seems ever to have acted upon a principle of increasing His revelations, and not of diminishing them. Because thou hast seen *creation*, believest thou—thou shalt see greater things than these, thou

shalt see the Creator Himself! The sun and the stars, the forest and the sea, the great mountain and the fertile vale, are but alphabetic, and he who looks upon them with a right design shall be called to higher revelations still—"Because thou hast seen *events* thou hast believed; thou hast seen a power in society giving shape and tendency to events that appeared to be confused and without meaning; thou hast put things together, and out of their union hast come to a conclusion that there is a providence that shapes our ends; thou hast found in the busy streets that men were moving in order, that they only appeared to be struggling in confusion, and that the affairs of men, after all, were moving round a centre that was keeping them in their places and working out in them some great beauty; thou hast seen these things, and thou, in so far, hast been a believer in God; thou shalt see greater things than these, it shall be thy joy to believe that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without thy Father, that the very hairs of thy head are all numbered, and that there is not one grain of dust in the universe which bears not the impress of God's ownership: because thou hast seen the *Bible*, the written record,—the mere letter,—thou hast believed; true, indeed, thou hast been baffled by much that appeared discrepant and insufficient; many a time thou hast been puzzled and perplexed by things in the record which appeared to be beyond reconciliation, and of which no man can give thee a meaning that satisfieth thy heart,—thou shalt see greater things than these; from the letter thou shalt pass to the spirit; the book itself shall be forgotten in a still higher gift; thou shalt lose inspiration in the Inspirer Himself. This is the stimulating language in which Jesus Christ addresses all true inquirers. You never can find the end of Divine revelation. The New Testament has no final page. We come to what we consider to be the end, and lo! the end is more suggestive than the beginning; and where we expected to pause we find that it is only to pause on our feet that we may stretch the wings of a higher being, and soar in the loftier regions of Divine manifestation and government. Jesus Christ said to Nathanael, Hereafter thou shalt see;—yes, Christianity has not only a great past, it has a great future. *Hereafter* thou shalt see! I venture to say that no man who is deeply learned in the Christian life is of opinion that he has reached the final line of Divine revelation. He is evermore given to feel that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that has yet been realized. This is our encouragement as Christian students, yet this brings us into a deep humility of spirit because we are given to feel, that however vast may be our attainments, we are still but little children in the great school of the universe. To increase, therefore, in the knowledge of God is to increase in lowliness of mind; yet whilst our humility

deepens we are not driven into despair, for the glory of God is not the terror, but the inspiration, of humble souls. It is not uncommon for men who criticise Christianity adversely to talk of the Christian revelation as if it were complete, as if nothing more were to be shown to the Christian mind; we venture to say that the Christian revelation itself is yet in its beginning, and that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive how much light and truth there is yet to break out of God's Holy Word, and how extensive and profound is the ministry of the Holy Ghost in the heart of man. I cannot preach the doctrine of finality in connection with the Cross. I believe we have yet but seen the dim outline of Jesus Christ's truth—that we are standing in the grey twilight, and that the time of the full shining of the sun has not as yet arrived. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," is a doctrine which the most advanced student may rely upon as a stimulus to further study. We know in part, and in part only; towards that which is perfect we are called upon to move with patience and with sure hope. Sinful man! Thou too hast a hereafter. Art thou prepared for the to-morrow that is before thee? Thou hast further revelation of the Divine throne to receive; what if it come to thee in thunder and lightning, and great tempests of judgment? I would speak to thee tenderly about this hereafter; for it can be no joy to Christian hearts to foretell the ruin of human souls; but believe me that whilst Christian inquirers are joyfully anticipating the bright hereafter which Jesus Christ has promised to them, those who are not in Christ ought solemnly to consider how far they are prepared for the hereafter which will surely transpire. I do not seek to frighten any man into virtue; he who is frightened into a new life may be frightened out of it again. My hope is in love; but you have understanding enough of ordinary life to apprehend me when I say that love itself is bound to disclose all the realities of the case. Among the realities of your case, so far as I read the New Testament and interpret the mind of Christ, is a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation if you have not fled to the Cross and laid hold upon it as the answer to your sin. This is plain speaking, because the case is plain; this is direct appeal, because in such cases ambiguity would bring upon the speaker the just charge of exposing human souls to death.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

On Thursday, January 6th, 1870, the first of a series of *Parables* will be delivered in the Poultry Chapel, service commencing at the usual hour,—Twelve o'clock.

The City Temple.

A Parable

ON CHRISTIAN FAITH.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

DELIVERED

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, JANUARY 6TH, 1870.

A RIVER has special charms for me—always arriving, always departing; softening the landscape, and completing the circle of the firmament; rich with manifold reflections, and eloquent with the sad yet soothing minor in which all Nature speaks in her gentlest moods. I love to tarry by the river-side, to look, to listen, to wonder, and to feel the pleasant unrest of constant expectation. Standing by a river, one seems to be on the edge of another world—life, motion, music—signs that tell of speed, gliding and darting, that look as if activity had solved the mystery of industrious repose; breaking bubbles that hint at something of incompleteness and disappointment; occasional floodings and rushings that tell of power under control,—all are seen in that flowing world. It was whilst indulging this, perhaps, eccentric taste, that I came unexpectedly upon a sceptical friend, who was seeking quietness after a most exciting study of what he deemed a triumphant refutation of the Christian argument. It was through no mere stubbornness of mind that my friend often ranged himself on the side of religious doubt. He had high natural veneration; his regard for the convictions of other people was even scrupulously respectful; there was nothing coarsely demonstrative in his way of putting the arguments on which his doubt rested; he was thoughtful, modest, and sincere. His scepticism was in part due, strange as it may appear, to his early association with very religious people—people whose notions were dogmatic and final—who had themselves never

known a doubt, and who, consequently, regarded even the most diffident and unwilling doubt in others as a sure sign of a perverted intellect and a ruined heart. The infallibility of this finalism was most obnoxious to a man so strong-minded, so inquisitive, and so earnest. It is not difficult to understand that, in the course of his perplexity, he came to feel a sense of gladness when a mind acuter than his own succeeded in throwing a doubt upon the Christian argument. He would never willingly suffer that argument to be merely *vilified;* he demanded reasoning, he insisted upon candour, and, with a sensibility most creditable to his moral nature, he shrank from every assault that was directed by a desire to sneer, or by ambition to excel, in mere controversy. He was rather a speculative than a moral doubter. He did not seek to throw down Christianity, that he might sin with wider licence. Christianity was not a spectre that terrified his conscience, but a problem that mocked or tormented his intellect. So many questions came back upon him unanswered, if not resented, so many shadows thickened upon his path when he turned aside from the highway of orthodoxy, and so many reputable men yielded him but partial confidence, that at last he was even thankful for occasional refuge in the most gloomy and chilling vaults of doubt. I knew his history, and could therefore approach him with the delicacy which was necessary to secure his confidence. Knowing how much easier it is to *defend* doubt than to *teach* it, I preferred, after hearing his account of the book he had been reading, to put myself in the position of a scholar rather than that of a teacher, and to find my way cautiously to the ground on which I could most directly and successfully appeal to him.

I could see that, after all, he was not free from trouble in his gladness. A shadow seemed to lie across his joy. He was rather forcing himself into conviction than yielding without reluctance to a strong and confident persuasion. He wanted rest, and for the moment it seemed as if *doubt* would give him the peace which he could not find in *faith.* By a few careful inquiries and suggestions I got him to begin the more formal statement of his case at a very important point:—

"If I am to be saved by *faith,*" said he, "then I shall never be saved at all."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Because I cannot believe."

"Do you mean, then, that you have no faculty, if I may so express myself, no faculty of faith—don't you believe *anything?*"

"I don't believe Christianity," said my friend, with somewhat of reluctance in his tone.

"That may be; but, apart from that altogether, don't you believe *anything* in all the world?—mark, I say *anything?*"

"Of course, I believe a good deal; but what has that to do with believing Christianity?"

"Wait a moment," said I; "in the meantime you say that you do believe a good many things, so that you have the power of faith, or the faculty of faith, as I just now called it. Now, will you tell me what faith *is?*"

"Faith is belief."

"But what is belief?"

"Allowing a thing to be *true* is belief, I should say."

"Then, don't you allow Christianity to be true?"

"I will go so far as to say that it may be true, for anything I know; but whether it is true or not, I cannot believe it—that is to say, I cannot see how *faith* can save a man; I can understand how *virtue* can save a man, but not how he can be saved by faith; it seems a disproportionate, and, in fact, an outrageous condition."

"I see; now you are narrowing the ground. With regard to the *facts* of the Christian religion, you decline to offer an opinion at present; you say they may be true or may not be true, for aught you know; but even allowing them to be true, you don't see how faith in them can be the condition upon which men are saved. Is that your position?"

"It *is*. Jesus Christ may have lived and died, and done everything just as the New Testament says He did; but even allowing all that, I cannot see what my believing it has to do with my present or future happiness."

"Well, we now have a clear issue before us. Pardon me if I digress for a moment: How long has your brother been in the colonies?"

"Full seven years."

"Why did he leave England?"

"He felt it would be for the good of his family, if he tried one of the colonies."

"That is to say, he *believed* that it would be for the good of his family?"

"Yes."

"Very well; then, according to your own mode of putting the case, the word 'felt' may be occasionally used instead of the word 'believed'—is it so?"

"It is."

"Well, let that be remembered. Pardon me, if I ask another question: Did you not offer to sell two of your fields a few weeks ago?"

"Yes."

"Why did you offer to sell them?"

"I thought it would be well to——"

"Excuse me; I don't care to know the reason; but when you say you 'thought' it would be well, you mean you 'believed' it would be well—did you not?"

"Certainly."

"Then here is another word which may be occasionally used instead of believed; so that we have two words with which faith is interchangeable—'we felt,' 'we thought,' may be equivalent to 'we believed'—you see that?"

"Yes, of course."

"Still, you cannot see how faith can be necessary to salvation?"

"No."

"Yet, I think you are getting a point nearer. Now, look up the river; don't you see the ferry moving across?"

"Yes."

"Do you believe it is moving to the other side?"

"Of course."

"Do you see anybody in it?"

"Several people are in it."

"Did they *believe* the ferry was going across the river, when they got into it?"

"I suppose so, else they would not have got into it."

"Stop! Does that follow? You say *you* believe it is going over to the other side; yet, though you believe that, you don't go in it?"

"No; because I don't *want* to go."

"Precisely; still you see that the mere belief that the ferry was going across the river did not cause the people to get into it; there was more than simple acknowledgment of a fact. Now, you will say that the people *wanted* to cross the river, and therefore they got into the ferry—is that so?"

"Of course; they wanted to go, and consequently they got in."

"Pardon me; you say 'consequently.' Now, it strikes me that there is a link wanting; is there not?"

"Nay; the thing is clear enough: the people wanted to go across, and they got into the ferry."

"Let me, then, ask you a question: Suppose that the people *did not believe* that the ferry was going across the river, would they have got in?"

"Of course not."

"Then even so 'disproportionate and outrageous' a thing as *belief* had something to do with their being in the boat?"

"No doubt of it."

"The people wanted to go, but the mere wanting to go would not carry them over; they must have an opportunity of getting across, and even the opportunity would be useless, unless they really believed that it *was* an opportunity. Do you go with me thus far?"

"I do, of course."

"Then let us see how the case stands. The people wanted to cross; there was a boat to carry them; they really believed that the boat was going across; but now, supposing that at the last moment they believed that the boat was not strong enough to carry them, would they go?"

"Probably not; if they really thought that the boat would break down, of course they would not go."

"Here, then," said I, "'belief' comes in, and plays an important part; and now the case stands thus: there must be a felt want; there must be an opportunity of supplying that want; there must be belief in the intended destination of the boat; and there must be faith in its strength to meet the requirements of the occasion. The *want* would not be enough; the *opportunity* would not be enough; the *belief* would not be enough. Is this so?"

"I don't see," said my friend, "how it can be otherwise."

"Very well; but so far we have put the case as if it were all on one side; let us break it up into its relative proportions. Part of it belongs to the ferryman, part to the people. The ferryman says, in effect,—'I am going to the other side of the river; there is room in the ferry for a hundred persons; it is a strong boat, and every way well suited for its work; he that believeth let him come.' The people's part is to consider the ferryman's statement, and to ground their action upon it; and every one who avails himself of the opportunity of crossing, virtually says, 'I believe.' Do you see any flaw in this statement?"

My friend admitted that he did not, and continued—"But supposing the people did not believe the ferryman, how then?"

"Why, of course they would not go; still the argument would go dead against your first position, for it would still be a question of *belief*. The people wanted to go, they had an opportunity of going, but simply because they did not *believe* in the man who offered the opportunity, they remained behind; now, the ferryman might hold such language as this, 'He that believeth may go; he that believeth not will be left,'—might he not say this?"

"He might, certainly, with all propriety, too."

"Well, and suppose that on reaching the other side of the river the ferryman should be asked why some were left behind, what explanation could he offer?"

"He would, of course, say that those who were left behind did not *believe* him; and what I want to know is, whether they had not a perfect right to disbelieve him? The whole thing, as I see it, turns upon that question."

"Then," said I, "as you attach so much importance to that question, instead of answering you, I shall give you an opportunity of answering yourself. You saw the agent who visited the town a few years ago, for the purpose of getting shareholders in the new County Bank?"

"I did."

"Did you take any shares?"

"I took ten; did you take any?"

"No. Did they pay you, may I ask?"

"They paid well—paid better, in fact, than any other shares I ever had."

"Well, I refused to take any, because I did not believe the representations which the agent made; and had I not a perfect right to disbelieve him?"

"You had."

"But how does it come that I have not been enriched by the undertaking?"

"Because you did not go into it.'

"But had I not a perfect right to refuse to go into it?"

"Of course you had; but if you did refuse, you cannot expect to share the benefits which accrue from it."

"Precisely; and that is the answer to your own question: the people who did not believe the ferryman did not go in the boat, and though they had a perfect right to remain behind, the only right they now have is to reproach themselves for unbelief, and not to rail against the faith of other people."

"That is true, certainly," said my friend; "but what I want to know is, why cannot men be saved whatever they may believe or not believe?"

"That is a great question," said I; "and we may, perhaps, most successfully work our way to the answer, by beginning with the secular side of life. I would beg you, then, to dismiss from your mind all theological terms, and, if possible, all theological prejudices. You remember the man who once threw discredit upon your word, when you made some statement about town affairs in the newspapers?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you ever invite that man to your table?"

"Certainly not."

"But why do you say that so firmly?"

"Because the man almost called me a liar in the public prints."

"You mean that he did not believe your word, and that he openly expressed his disbelief?"

"Yes."

"But why should the man be deprived of your hospitality, whatever he may believe or may not believe?"

"But what confidence can I have in him?"

"Ah! there is another word which you make equivalent to faith, that is the word 'confidence;' now, what do you mean by having 'confidence' in a man?"

"I mean trusting him and respecting him as a man of honour."

"Quite so; but if you knew that he did not believe in obligation or in social honour, could you trust him?"

"Certainly not."

"But what I want to know is, why you cannot trust him, whatever he may believe or may not believe?"

"Because I should think that if he did not believe in honour, he would not care to maintain it."

"Exactly, my friend; now we are at the root of this part of the matter: we now begin to see that *faith* is the inspiration of *life*—that is, that men's behaviour is, so to speak, but an outside thing; there is something under it which governs and directs it—the act is the body, the thought is the soul—man's life is an effect, faith is the cause. How far do I carry you with me?"

"I see, that if a man is honest, he won't do a thing unless he believes in it."

"Quite so; and you might safely go a step further, and say, the man who did a thing without believing it was a hypocrite, and that the man who believed a thing and did not do it was unfaithful to himself, and that the man who believed in a thing and did the very opposite was acting wickedly?—can you say this?"

"I don't see why I should not say every word of it."

"But, to make the whole thing clearer," I continued, "let us look a little into the ways of men; if there are not various kinds of faith, there are certainly various phases of it. Look at the farmer; what sustains him during seedtime and harvest?"

"No doubt, the expectation of a good crop."

"Truly."

"But you see," my friend interposed, with somewhat of triumph in his tone, "he had known that through hundreds and thousands of years the thing had gone on in a certain order."

"Well, be it so; but suppose that before seedtime he had wrought

himself to the belief that, in this particular year, there would be bad wheat crops, would his belief influence his action, or would it not?"

"Of course it would influence his action; he would be foolish to go in the face of his belief."

"Very good; now that is case number one—the *farmer* works by faith. Your friend, the iron-merchant, consigned ten thousand pieces of cast-iron to an agent in Melbourne—actually sent them to a man he had never seen—how do you account for that?"

"No doubt he felt convinced that the transaction would turn out all right," my friend replied.

"Really," said I, "you have given me another word—presently, we shall be able to set up a vocabulary apart from theological technicalities—you say 'convinced' instead of 'believed,' and the word is well chosen. Now I have three equivalent words given to me by yourself—'felt,' 'thought,' 'convinced;' but the point to be kept in view is, that the iron-merchant, in sending ten thousand pieces of iron to a man he had never seen, and probably never would see, actually did the business on faith——"

"Perhaps," my friend eagerly suggested, "he got the money first; then, where was the faith?"

"The faith, then," said I, "was on the side of the other contracting party; the man who sent the money first, must have had faith that the iron would be forthcoming. What I want you to see is, that the transaction could not have taken place without *faith*, either on one side or the other; do you admit that?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, then, we may call that case number two, and say the *merchant* walks by faith. Will you now tell me what sent Columbus over the sea to discover if there was a continent in the Far West?"

"Of course he felt persuaded that there was land out there."

"That is a fourth word—'persuaded'—equivalent, as you used it, to 'believed.' Here, again, we have faith; in the absence of faith Columbus would not have gone; but the faith was so strong that he could not rest until he had carried out his plan. Do you acknowledge this?"

"I see no reason to deny it," my friend replied.

"Then we may call that case number three, and say the *explorer* walks by faith. Now, to come nearer home, Why did you marry your present wife in preference to every other woman?—excuse the question, and answer it, if you please."

"Because I believed her to be the woman best suited, in every respect, for me."

"Once more, then, we have faith as the basis of action; but why could you not have married some other person, whatever you believed or did not believe about her?"

"That would have been impossible; because, if I had not believed well of her, I could not have married her."

"Your answer is correct, and we may put it down as case number four, that *you* yourself do, in the most important affairs in life, walk by *faith*. Do you see this?"

"I see it so far clearly, but I don't see why I should be excluded from heaven, simply because I don't believe what other people believe; I may be as good as they are, whatever I believe."

"Wait! Don't jump to false conclusions. Recollect the case of the ferry: the people were excluded from it, simply because they did not *believe*. Think of the bank shares: I was excluded from profits, because I did not *believe*, and therefore did not take shares; so that it seems people *are* excluded from advantages, simply and solely because they do not *believe*. That point is certain. It is a law of society, and nobody complains of it. So much for one side of your objection; it now remains to be shown that your acceptation of the term 'faith' is narrow, and by so much untrue. You seem to imagine that it is simply a matter of intellectual assent, and so far you are perfectly right in imagining that intellectual assent is an insufficient condition of salvation; but now go back to daily life for definition and illustration of faith. Keep to the case of the people and the ferry; they were told that the ferry was going across the river; would their mere intellectual assent have taken them to the other side?"

"Certainly not," said my friend.

"But they *believed* that the boat was going?"

"Certainly; but they did not act upon their belief."

"That is the very point," said I; "so you see it is not mere *belief*, but *belief acted upon*, that is meant by the term *faith*. I may believe that if I put a thousand pounds in the bank, I shall receive so much per cent., but, unless I act upon my belief, I shall not receive the interest. You may say that this is salvation by *works*, but it is not; the works are the result of faith; but for the faith the works would never have been attempted, so that the cause, and not the effect, must give its name to the process."

"But why should I be excluded from heaven, because I do not believe?"

"Precisely, only in infinitely higher degree, on the same principle that you exclude persons from your hospitality who do not believe in you."

"Explain yourself," said my friend.

"You said, a few moments ago, that you married your wife because you thought her every way suitable for you, did you not?"

"I did."

"Now, I don't believe a word you said on the subject."

My friend looked aghast, and said, "You amaze me!"

"Did you not explain how it was that your brother went to the colonies?"

"I did."

"Now, I don't believe a word you said on that subject either."

My friend turned pale, and looked at me eagerly, saying, as he looked, "Whatever do you mean?"

"I mean, just that I don't believe a word you say; I reject your testimony."

My friend rose, and with undisguised feeling said, "Then, the sooner we part the better!"

I answered, "Hold! why should I be excluded from your society, whatever I believe or do not believe?"

"You can have no pleasure in my society, if you do not trust me, nor can I have any in yours."

"Thank you," said I; "sit down. I was putting you to the test, for I knew that your creed would break down at the practical point. I want you to see that more depends upon *faith*, even in the common relations of life, than is generally supposed; and, from what you know of the every-day affairs of life, I want you to reason upward to the highest considerations of character and destiny. Meanwhile, one thing is clear: *you* would exclude me from your society, simply on the ground that I do not believe you; now, why should *God* admit people to His society who treat His Word as if it were a lie, and His Son as if He were an impostor?"

"But what if they do not believe that it *is* His Word?—that is my argument," said my friend.

I stopped him there, saying, "That question is not now before us; we shall come to that by-and-bye; the question immediately before us, which you yourself started at the beginning of our interview, relates to the *necessity* and *efficacy* of faith as a condition of salvation. I must insist upon our being at one on that point before we proceed further."

My friend paused, as if not knowing what to reply. I knew the transparency and perfect candour of his mind; that it was not in him to quibble for quibbling's sake, and my whole heart went out with great solicitude towards him. I saw that the opportunity was mine, and I said, "Now let me preach you a short sermon on the subject of our con-

versation. The fact is, that faith underlies the whole system of life—you cannot send a boy on an errand without faith ; you cannot employ property without faith ; you cannot sow seed without faith ; you can neither eat, drink, nor sleep without faith ; you cannot take a journey without faith. As I have just said, it penetrates the whole system of life ; it keeps men together ; it renders intercourse a means of blessing, and saves solitude from despair. As we have now defined it, faith is not mere assent to a number of propositions ; it is, as you say, feeling, thinking, persuasion, conviction ; it means more than sentiment, more than negative approval ; it takes up the whole nature, and bears it forward with all the conquering energy of a divine inspiration. I think too, it was most gracious on the part of Christ to make *faith* the basis of acceptance on His part. He found men believing ; He found them in all the lower concerns of life walking by faith, and instead of introducing a new and revolutionary law, He took men's nature as He found it, and said, 'Ye believe in God ; believe also in Me.' Men complain because the apostle says, 'Without faith it is impossible to please God ;' but why should they complain ? Without faith it is equally impossible to please *man*. Just now, when I said that I did not believe you, you suggested that our intercourse should cease, thereby showing that without faith it was impossible to please you ; why, then, should it be deemed so extraordinary, or, as you say, so disproportionate and outrageous a thing, that God should require exactly what man himself requires ? "

My friend here intimated that he still wished to argue the question which he had just proposed ; but as the June sunset was far advanced, and we both had a considerable distance to walk, though in different directions, I told him that we had better defer further conversation until we had more time at command. He was good enough to say —

" You talk to me so *humanly ;* you do not stand off and command me haughtily ; you touch my life, and compel me to say things to you that I never said to any other man."

I thanked him. " I tell you what it is, friend," I continued, " the Gospel is not something that is superimposed upon man ; it reveals man to himself ; it gives articulation to the mighty but dumb desires of the human heart, and is often felt to be a Divine *Revelation* simply because it is a Divine *Expression*, putting into words what the soul has been vainly struggling to utter. Let me say further that, if you accept me as your teacher, I shall give you the texts at the *end* of the lessons rather than at the *beginning ;* in fact, I shall make you your own text ; I shall preach out of your life, and give you, if possible, to feel that Jesus Christ knows you better than you know yourself, and that His Gospel is the only true answer to the most anxious strife and expectation of the human heart."

"When shall we meet again?" he inquired.

"This day week," said I, and we parted—I a stronger Christian; he a less determined doubter as to the functions of faith in the highest life of mankind.

Lord, increase our faith: help us to walk by faith, not by sight, and to endure as seeing the invisible. Teach us how poor a world is possible to the senses, and how vast a universe is revealed to the vision of Christian faith. Help us to honour Jesus Christ with our deepest trust, to put ourselves into His holy keeping, and to draw our inspiration from His infinite love. We would have our conversation in heaven; we would live away from earth; we would drink of the river of Thy delights. Good Lord, hear us,—blessed God, save us with Thy mighty hand. We bless Thee for all the rewards of faith which we have already enjoyed, for our dominion over time, for our mastery of the flesh, for our independence of earthly ease. We would still further know the blessedness of faith in Thee and in Jesus Christ. We would never doubt Thee. In the darkness we would hold Thy hand, in the light we would see Thy face, in the storm we would hear Thy voice, and in all things would see proofs of Thy wisdom and care. Specially, give us the faith which bringeth salvation, and openeth to our hearts the prospect of heaven. Amen.

The City Temple.

A Parable

ON REVELATION.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER.

DELIVERED

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, JANUARY 13TH, 1870.

I THOUGHT much of my friend's admission that I had spoken to him *so humanly;* it threw me back upon Jesus Christ's method of teaching: how He turned common life into a religious argument; how the signs of the sky, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air, and the sheep of the pasture, became illustrations of His doctrine; how He compelled men to make one admission after another until He left them without excuse; and how by the omnipotence of gentleness He sought the sway of the human heart. My friend responded to sympathy, and bowed himself before the claims of common sense. He had a wonderful moral nature; almost morbidly conscientious, yet most unsuspecting and generous in all his interpretations of human conduct. But for this generosity I should have formed a different estimate of his religious difficulties. Had he been narrow, suspicious, and misanthropic in his general views of life, his theological scruples might have been attributed to mere love of disputation, but I knew him to be frank, liberal, and magnanimous, always ready to console the disconsolate and uphold the cause of the weak—never withholding the admiration due to merit, and always more than willing to magnify the excellencies of his friends. Yet this noble spirit had become deeply overshadowed, and the darkness sorely disquieted him, so much so that he often openly complained of a restlessness which was as hard to endure as a great affliction. Always prepared to receive

instruction, he would never endorse a conclusion until he had tested all the links which connected it with first principles. The reasoning power which had been ignored or dishonoured by his early religious teachers now asserted its supremacy with an emphasis which would have been immodest but for the prevailing diffidence of his character. They who unduly bend the bow must be held responsible for the violence of the recoil. To a religious teacher my friend brought at least one decided advantage—the advantage of having a deep interest in religious questions. Opposition is better than indifference. The man who denies every proposition you make and argues vehemently for the other side is in a healthier state of mind than the man who is utterly indifferent, who cares nothing whether your doctrines are right or wrong, and who has scarcely life enough to listen to the words which are specially addressed to him. You may tame a roaring lion, but you can only bury a dead dog.

On the day appointed for our second interview my friend found his way into my study, and, after brief salutations, laid on the table a pocket copy of the Bible, and said in a subdued yet emphatic tone—

"There! *that* is my difficulty. I am prepared to go with you in all you say about the importance and even the necessity of *Faith;* but what am I to make of this book? I cannot receive it; it confounds and mocks me. I have read it, every word, and I decline to accept it; *that* is my position. Can you get me out of it?"

"I can tell you why *I* received it," I quietly answered, thinking it better not to resent something in the tone that sounded like self-satisfaction; "but before doing so, let us see how far we occupy common ground. When we look at the points on which we are agreed we shall know more distinctly our points of difference."

It was a brilliant summer day. The prospect from my study window was one of uncommon beauty; the far-off wood was gracefully yielding to the breeze; the meadows were beautiful with the richest green; the fruitful hills vied in loveliness with the luxuriant vales; everywhere was plain the handiwork of an agent mightier than man.

"Look out of the window," I continued, "and tell me what you think of *that* book. That book at least must have had an author. Will you tell me what you think about its authorship?"

My friend quickly replied: there was a flush upon his intelligent face as he said—"*God* wrote that book, every word and syllable of it—pray don't mistake me for an atheist; if you want plain speaking, then, I tell you at once that an atheist is a fool;—yes, *God* wrote that great and lustrous volume."

"So far, then," I replied, "we have two distinct and important points in common; first, we have *God*, and secondly, we have God as *the author*

of Nature. I tell you candidly, that if you had denied the Divine authorship of that book of light and hill and dale, I should not have argued with you; in my opinion an atheist is a madman; I have nothing to say to him; he is not within the pale of reasoning. So let it be understood between us that we are thoroughly agreed that *God is the author of the book of Nature.* Now tell me, if you please, what inferences you have drawn respecting the author of this book?"

"Why of course," said my friend, "that he is all-powerful and all-wise. There is such clear adaptation of means to ends, and such a control over the mightiest forces, that I am compelled to the conclusion that God is wise and powerful, infinitely so. I hold this faith most firmly, as firmly as the most devoted Christian can hold it, and I am prepared to contend for it under all opposition."

I replied—"So far, then, we are still on common ground: now let me put to you what may appear to be a very simple question—Why do the soil and the light and the air and the dew so combine as to produce fruit? I mean, why could we not have had sky and earth, hill and dale, wood and water, without any produce such as corn, or fruit, or roots suitable for food? Pardon the simplicity of the question, and its apparent irrelevancy."

"Why, that is plain enough," my friend answered; "of course man requires nourishment. He could not live without food, so God has made the earth productive under certain conditions. I should think that does not admit of two opinions."

"Then do I understand you to say that the human body is not *self*-supporting? That it requires *external* aid? That it must appropriate the products of the earth, or else die?"

"Certainly, I do say that: a man cannot live without food."

"Very well; still we are on common ground," said I: "the fact which I wish to be remembered is, that man's physical nature has not within it *self-sustaining force;* it must go out of itself, so to speak, for elements of nutrition and growth;—to put the idea into somewhat of a fanciful form, the body must read the book of Nature; it is not its own book; it must study the pages of creation, and go by their instructions: is it so?"

"Yes; man has physical faculties for appropriation and digestion, but of course he must go to nature for the materials on which those faculties must operate. That is plain enough."

"Well, now let us turn the conversation a little," said I. "How is your boy doing at school; don't you miss him very much?"

"Very much indeed," my friend answered; "but we send him a box of things every now and then."

"What do you mean by a box of things," I inquired.

"Things we know he likes; things to eat, things to wear, things to play with; nothing comes amiss to boys."

"Quite so; I see he is like all other boys; still I wonder you don't *write* to him now and then."

"*Write* to him!" my friend exclaimed. "Of course we write to him; we write every week regularly, and I am not sure that we don't write to him twice a week sometimes."

"But what can he want with letters," said I, "when he gets a box of things so often: isn't a box better than a letter; is it not absurd on the boy's part to want any more writing from you than the mere label on the box?"

"Ha! ha!" my friend replied. "Tom wants to know the news, and he never writes a letter without putting in one corner '*Write soon*,' which he generally underlines at least three times; and I tell you plainly, it would be a bitter thing for us if he did not want letters from home."

"Then I understand you to say that it would not be enough for you to know that he enjoyed the boxes of things; you are glad he does that; but you want to have intercourse with his higher nature, to know his mind and his heart. I am right, am I not?"

"Entirely."

"You would not like him," I continued, "to take the boxes of things as if *anybody* in the world might have sent them; you wish him to think of them in connection with his parents, with his home, with love and wisdom on your part; in short, you wish him to get at the *moral purpose* as well as the *physical uses* of what you send?"

"Most undoubtedly."

"Then we are still on common ground; now let us come back to the book of Nature. If you will allow me to use a homely phrase, God sends you boxes of things; He sends the corn, the fruit, the flesh of beast and bird, and the thousand comforts of nature. Now, are these enough? You say it would be a bitter thing for you if your boy did not want letters from home; do you think it can be a pleasant thing to God to know that all you want is the box of things,—that you care not for His thoughts, nor for the love that fills His infinite heart? Would it not be a heart-breaking thing for you to know that your boy greedily devoured or used the things you sent him, but left your letters unopened?"

"It would grieve me beyond everything," said my friend, "if I thought my letters were not read; but such a monstrous thing, on the part of my child, I cannot allow myself to imagine."

"A monstrous thing, indeed," said I; "but take care how far you

go in your admissions; you may be preparing a rod for your own back. Has God not sent you any letter!"

"The book of Nature," said my friend, "is His letter, and I read it."

"Hold!" said I; "the book of Nature is not the letter but the box of things—the box of things sent for the physical sustenance of man; but suppose your child was to read the label on the box you send, and say, 'That is my father's writing,' and to content himself with drawing general inferences respecting your disposition towards him, I ask you plainly—*would that satisfy you?*"

"Most certainly it would not satisfy me; it would grieve me exceedingly; and if you can show me that God has written a letter to me, or to mankind in general, I shall read every word of it as I would wish my son to read every word of mine."

"This is right in point of disposition," I replied; "what we have still to do is, to ascertain how far we are upon common ground. Now, will you tell me how far you believe God to be powerful and wise?"

"I believe Him to be all-powerful and all-wise; there is no limit to His power or His wisdom: nature teaches me at least this much about Him."

"All-powerful, you say?" I replied; "then will you grant me this much—viz., that so far as mere power is concerned, God *could* have sent a letter to His creatures—mark you, I put it, in the first instance, on the low ground of mere *power*—will you grant this?"

"Of course I will; that follows necessarily; if He is all-powerful, He must have power to do this."

"So far, then, we are still on common ground: now the reverse of your position must also be true—viz., that if God has not written a letter it is not for want of *power* to write it."

"Certainly; that may be granted."

"Then as you grant that, we may advance a step further. I understood you to say that the body has not a self-sustaining power; it must appropriate suitable elements which are outside of it, and which were provided for it by this all-powerful and all-wise God. Now, if this be the case with the body, is it not also the case with the *mind?* Has the mind within itself all the elements necessary for its internal sustenance and growth, or must it draw from other minds ideas and impulses for its own enrichment and quickening? To put the matter in an extreme form, take it thus:—Put a child upon an uninhabited island; let it have everything necessary for its bodily sustenance, but no opportunity of conversation or instruction; shut off all other mind, and leave the mind of the child entirely to itself—what do you imagine would be the consequence?"

"I suppose," said my friend, "that under such circumstances, without instruction, without books, without any means of communicating with the intelligence of the world, the mind would not be unlikely to degenerate into imbecility, or into positive insanity."

"Well, however that may be, I think we are agreed that the mind, like the body, needs something *beyond itself* to stimulate, enrich, and satisfy it. What is your opinion upon that point?"

"I grant all that," said my friend; "but cannot we stimulate one another? Do not authors teach readers? Don't the wise instruct the ignorant?"

"Very true," said I; "and that in itself is a proof of the very thing I am contending for; but who instructed the *first* man? You may say that the field grows not only food, but also seed for the next crop; but who sowed the first seed? Where did the first seed come from? You may say that the sun lights the earth; but who kindled the sun? Take the case of the first man: on whom did he depend for mental expansion and illumination?"

"Of course," was my friend's reply, "he depended upon God for his mind as well as for his body; but had he not the book of Nature to read?"

"Think of your own boy," I answered; "he has the box of things; see what occasion that gives for profitable reflection! He might look at every article you send, and moralize upon it very sagely. He might say—'How well this garment is made; how exquisitely the different ingredients have been mingled in this cake; with what thoughtful regularity this box arrives, how neatly it is packed, how legibly it is directed.' All *that* he could say; but has not the lad a *heart?* Will not his soul go out after his parents in glowing admiration, and love, and thankfulness? Will he not earnestly desire to have intercourse with the hearts that cared for him with all this care? I ask you this, and let your innermost soul answer."

My friend looked at me with eyes that shone with a significant light. I knew that his fatherly heart was the true vein to work. I knew that there is nothing through which a man can see so far towards God as the love which he bears to his own child; so I held the telescope to his eye, and urged him to look at God through it.

"I know this," said he, "that if my boy were to care more for the box than for me, I should consider that he had *lost his heart* altogether."

There was a delicate pathos in my friend's voice as he uttered these words, and that pathos gave me hope. I never despair of a man who responds to a tender tone. So long as a man is moved at the sight of human misery, or feels a pang in his breast when even a strange child's

coffin is borne past him, or rises against injustice, or lightens honest industry with a smile, there is something in him to be wrought upon,—a root out of which may come flowers or fruit. I knew that there was root enough in my doubting friend; we only wanted to get the dew and the light down to it.

"Well, then," I continued, "let us work from that point. You would think that your boy had lost his heart altogether if he cared about the box and not about the letter; he would simply be a sensualist, caring for bodily enjoyment, and not heeding the mind or heart. I think you would be right in thinking so of him. Now, according to my view of the subject, God has given us this great bounty of nature; He sends it regularly; He never forgets seed-time or harvest; He sits above us and pours down ten thousand thousand blessings of life and nature, of health and reason, day by day. Is it enough to care for the gifts without caring for the Giver? Are we mere machines, having a faculty for eating, a power of appropriation and absorption? Have we no *hearts?* It seems to me, that if we were right-minded, there would go up from the deepest depths of our nature a cry for a revelation of the All-powerful and All-wise Being who gives us life, and breath, and all things freely to enjoy. We should give ourselves no rest until we knew more of Him."

"In all this argument," my friend said, "you have proceeded upon the principle that God is a *Father;* now where do you get that principle?"

"I get it out of the very Bible which you reject!"

"On the other hand," said he, "I proceed upon the principle that God is the Creator."

"Then let us argue the question on your own ground," said I; "and first of all let us make it clear that God is *more* than a Creator. We shall take our stand on Natural Theology, without opening the Bible at all. Let me ask you what you mean by '*Creator*'?"

"I mean that God made all that we see—the heavens and earth; that He set them in appointed places, and gave them appointed laws, and that everything exists by His will and power,—that is the general sense in which I use the term Creator."

"For all practical purposes that will do," said I. "Now you will allow that God has not merely created things,—that is, merely brought things into existence,—but that he has adapted one thing to another; that there is a *purpose* running through all things; that there is, in short, a marvellous *interdependence* and *consistency* in creation?"

"Certainly," said my friend, "I allow this; one thing is adapted to

another,—the soil to the seed, the light to the eye, the air to the lungs, and so forth."

"Very well: then while the *fact* of the creation gives us a Creator, the *manner* of the creation gives a *wise* Creator; do you allow this?"

"I allowed it at the very beginning; I said that God was all-powerful and all-wise."

"True; now look from nature, comprehensively so called, and tell me who created *man?*"

"*God* created man, of course," said my friend.

"Then will you be good enough to say what relation there subsists between man and God; you have admitted that there is a wise adaptation of the soil to the seed, the light to the eye, the air to the lungs, and so forth,—now will you say whether there is a similar point of unity or adaptation between man and God?"

"Most certainly I think there *is;* I contend that man should worship God in the great and beautiful temple of Nature; he should thank God for the bounties of His providence, and cherish a thankful spirit, and a reverent spirit too."

"Wait a moment, then," said I; "let us keep before our minds the fact of your boy being at school; and let us imagine him cherishing a thankful spirit to an *anonymous* friend who had sent him a box of things. Now you think that on your part such a spirit would suffice in relation to God, yet on the part of your boy you would deplore and deprecate it."

"Yes; because I do not know so much about God as my boy knows about me."

"But how can you know so much about Him when you will not read His letter."

"Show me that He has written a letter," he answered, "and, as I have just said, I will gladly read it every word."

"Have you read the Bible?"

"Yes."

"Does it *purport* to be a revelation from God?"

"Certainly it does."

"What proof have you that it purports to be a Divine revelation?"

"It constantly says that it is such. Times without number it says, 'Thus saith the Lord;' and all its writers are constantly referring to what the Lord has said or the Lord has done."

"Then such being the case, I think that you will allow that the Bible is either what it claims to be, or it is not what it claims to be; and if it is not what it claims to be, it must really be the *worst* book imaginable. Mark the argument; the Bible cannot be merely a very good book, or

a good enough book in its way, as the common phrase is; it lays claim to *too much* to be considered in that light. One of two things it must be,—either a distinct revelation from God, which it avows itself to be, or a horrible lie and most revolting blasphemy. It professes to record God's words and God's acts upon the earth; to foretell the future; to describe the world to come; and to lay down the duty of man: all this it does in the name of God, with most impressive and appalling solemnity. Now I ask you whether this book can occupy any *middle* position,—whether it is not either from heaven or from hell?"

"Certainly," said my friend, "it is, at any rate, not to be ranked with common books; it must occupy an extreme position; but may it not be regarded as a poem, or parable,—a great work of imagination?"

"In answering your question, let us clear our way by one or two preliminary inquiries: does the Bible *profess* to be a poem or a parable—I mean the Bible as a whole?"

"No; it does not profess to be such."

"Very well; then according to your own showing the Bible would be something that it does not profess to be."

"Well," said my friend, "but are there not many works of fiction which have about them all the appearance of veritable histories? They have the names of persons and places, and an arrangement of events which is so continuous and consistent as to present all the external evidence of being literally true. May not the Bible belong to this department of literature?"

"Another preliminary question, if you please," said I. "Are there not some portions of the Bible which profess to be parabolic or poetic?"

"There are several such portions."

"Then consider how much force attaches to this admission. Where one part is distinctly set forth as a parable, and another specially written as a poem, does not this very circumstance show by implication that the *other* portions are to be regarded as historical?"

"Certainly it has a bearing in that direction."

"If I sent you a letter, and marked several of the paragraphs as parabolic, or otherwise imaginative, would you not conclude that the paragraphs which are *not* so marked contained statements of fact which were to be interpreted in the natural and customary manner?"

"I don't hesitate to say that I should do so."

"Well; now here is a book several parts of which are distinctively poetic or parabolic, put down as such, put so clearly that no child can mistake them; I press you, therefore, with this question, *Does not the very fact that some portions are marked as parabolic give to other portions a historic aspect?*"

My friend saw the inevitable bearing of this inquiry, and hesitated in replying. I took occasion, consequently, to simplify this view of the subject.

"Suppose," I said, "in pointing out a number of flowers to you, I distinctly said that five of them were *artificial*, should I not leave it to be inferred that the others were *natural?* Or suppose that in calling your attention to a number of coins I pointed out some that were bad, should I not thereby leave upon your mind the impression that the others were good? So when the Bible says this is a parable, and that is a poem, I take this very discrimination as a proof that the other portions are not to be regarded as imaginative. Am I not right?"

My friend still hesitated, so I proceeded—

"Well, now, that we may have the argument clearly before us, let us see how far we have kept together. We believe in God all-powerful and all-wise. We agreed that He wrote the book of Nature; that He has at least the *power* to do as much by revelation for the human mind as He has done by nature for the human body; that if, along with the box of things, as we called the productions of the earth, He has sent a letter, we should be guilty of ingratitude if we did not care more for the letter than for the material gifts. We have agreed that there is a book which at all events *purports* to be a letter from God, and that if it is not the best book it is the worst book; but you at last suggested that it might be a work of imagination,—the answer of poetry to the great riddle of God, the universe, and man. In reply to this last suggestion, I have said that some portions of the Bible are distinctly marked as parabolic, and that this circumstance leaves the other portions to be otherwise regarded and valued. If no such distinction had been made in the book itself, your ground would have been so much stronger; but the fact of this distinction leaves you without any foothold. This is how the argument stands at present. Now let me tell you why, apart from the answer already given, I reject your theory of the Bible being merely a work of art—an elaboration of excited genius; and you must pardon me for suspending the dialogue, and aspiring to be your instructor. I believe in the God of Nature, the all-powerful and all-wise Creator and Sustainer of the universe. I see Him in the light; I hear Him in the winds; I feel Him in all the evolutions of the seasons; but I want to know more of Him. There is a keen hunger of the heart which no product of nature can appease; there are strugglings and mountings of the soul which tell me that man is more than dust; there are wars and tumults of the spirit which convince me that man has lost his equilibrium. I feel all this, and I want *something* to meet such conditions, and satisfy them. Under these circumstances the Bible

is given to me. I examine it. Mystery upon mystery comes up as I proceed; but I discover a marvellous correspondence between the doctrines of the book and the instincts of the heart. No other book ever spoke in so deep and clear a tone to my soul; it seems to know the whole range and compass of my nature, and to meet me at every turn. It speaks the native language of the heart;—it talks of sin and sorrow, of guilt and tears, of mercy and hope, of immortality and heaven. There is much I cannot understand. There are some things which appear contradictory; but not more contradictory than day and night, summer and winter, bane and antidote, youth and age. All the time the heart feels thrilled, and lifted up, and fired with the lofty ambition of new-born love. I feel that the Writer of Nature is also the Writer of Revelation; I see the same breadth of wisdom, the same vastness of power, the same boundless generosity, the same shadow of mystery wrought by the same Light of Divinity. The spirit within answers to the Spirit without, as a lost child would answer on a dark, wild night, to a distant voice that called him to hope and rest; all this I feel. I get beyond the mere letter. I see that discrepancies are only incompletenesses, that faded ink is not to be mistaken for unequal power; and as I should not deny the God of Nature because of the blunders of the agriculturist, so I should not deny the God of Revelation because of the slips of an incompetent or inattentive scribe. Now tell me," said I, "how far you go with me in this method of putting the case."

"I own," he replied, "that there are times when I do wish to know more than Nature seems to be able to tell me—yes, I remember" (this he said in a musing tone)—"Nature is too silent for me many a time. It was so when I buried my first-born, a bright and most comely boy, in whom I was to have lived my own life over again. It was a dark day when I laid his young head in the grave. I feel a chill in my heart, even now, as I think of it. A letter from God on that day would have been of some use to me."

"And there *was* a letter for you," said I. The tears were now gathered, and for the moment he had no words. I continued, endeavouring to touch the wound with a delicate hand, "The letter said—'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

That word seemed to bring him nearer to the Bible than any he had heard for a long time. But he could not proceed with argument. When men's hearts are conscious of great aching and poverty, logic is a poor barren thing to them. I bade him good-bye, to which he replied by a friendly grasp more fervent than usual. I reasoned upon his case thus: Men may come to the Bible in one of two different ways; they may come in

a captiously critical spirit, resolute in maintaining foregone and most prejudiced conclusions, or they may come in a child-like spirit of inquiry, their eyes blinded with such tears as sharpen the vision of the soul. The Bible is most precious to those who need it most. Its special adaptation is towards guilt, misery, and want. I can imagine a man who has never lost a child having many cavils to urge; but I cannot imagine any man, standing by the grave of his offspring, not being touched into tenderness by a book which told him that the child-roots which are buried on earth bloom as unfading flowers in heaven. It is apparently forgotten by many critics that man has a *heart* as well as a *head;* he wants an answer to his emotions as well as to his speculations. He gets through Nature, and cries for *Life*—the voices of Nature confound and perplex him, the voice of the Spirit finds access to the wondering and anxious *heart.* True, I cannot explain all the difficulties in the Bible, but what is there that *can* be fully explained, even in our own life? We contradict our own selves, we are constantly leaving our very identity behind us; our life, if true to the highest law, is a daily correction of itself; and surely we have had drill and sorrow enough to teach us that *explanation* is itself only another side of mystery, and that what is called *conclusion* is only a sign that another chapter is just about to begin.

The City Temple.

A Parable

ON REVELATION (*continued*).

BY

JOSEPH PARKER.

DELIVERED

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20TH, 1870.

IT occurred to me that probably a good purpose might be answered by committing to writing a brief and almost elementary statement of my own relation to the Bible, and offering to make that the basis of further inquiry; not that I wished to take the lead out of my friend's hands, but to save the conversation from the risks of unprepared answers on either side. My friend's state of mind required that we should begin on very general ground, leaving the hardest speculative questions to be taken after some of the most pressing moral difficulties had been considered. In our last interview my friend made a most important admission, viz., that sometimes Nature—his great idol—was too silent; that specially in his overwhelming sorrows did he feel mocked and defied by the speechlessness of his majestic and brilliant god. I felt that this admission was capable of being turned to the great advantage of the argument, and made it the starting-point of my paper. When my friend returned, I explained that I had written a brief statement, which I wished him to hear, and on receiving his cordial permission, I read as follows:—

"In our last interview you acknowledged that Nature was sometimes too silent for you; that there are periods in your history when you wish to know more than Nature can tell you. This I regard as a *presumption* (in the meantime I use no stronger word) in favour of the doctrine that

some revelation has been made. There is a book which professes at least to contain intelligence immediately from God. Now, I submit that the inquiry which this circumstance necessitates should start from the point of *human want.* How far does this book—making such great professions—meet and satisfy the *consciousness* of man? Man does not want merely dates, names, certificates of local incidents, or anything of that kind. He wants something better, something deeper. When the heart is hungering, when the brain is aching under the pressure of some great problem, when light and darkness are swiftly alternating on the way of life, this book is put into my hands. It is not likely under *such* circumstances that I should fritter away time in inquiries which do not touch the very core. The heart becomes impatient with petty details; its urgent questions press tumultuously upon the book, and if these be not answered with a considerable measure of satisfaction, it is driven back by the shock of a mortal disappointment. How, then, does this book respond to the inquiries of the soul? Let us ask it a few questions, and listen to its answers :—

"How is the existence of man to be accounted for? I would know something of human life—how it came to be, and how it will develop in ages to come. Can *Nature* tell me? Does the light know the secret, or will the winds whisper it, or is it told by the voice of the thunder? No. But the book says—God created man, created him in His own image and likeness. Now this is an answer beyond anything that mere Nature has told me. Whatever be the value of it, in the meantime it is certainly such a testimony as creation has not given me. What shall I do with such an answer? Let me take it to my consciousness, so to speak, and ascertain how far it meets the wants of the heart. Is there, then, about me anything Divine? Am I conscious of a nature superior to everything about me? Is there a royalty which says, I am greater than the sun? Is there a hunger which cannot be appeased by the products of earth? I know there is,—it is not a lesson I have learned from the outside, it is a truth which is inwoven with my very constitution. There are instincts of lordliness in man which are to be accounted for, and the answer which the book gives (whatever may be its value) is that man was created in the image and likeness of God.

"Then another question forces itself upon me. I know that I have some dispositions which are bad; there are times when my nature seems to be rebellious, tossed with unholy tumult, or fired with most ignoble ambition: what is the meaning of this? Can Nature tell me? Will the sea tell the secret, or the volcano answer the mystery? Why am I not always calm? Why are my desires not always pure and elevated? This experience must be accounted for. Nature is silent; but the book says, You have lost your moral equilibrium; your heart has been

estranged from God; you have carried your instincts of mastery, right enough in themselves, too far, and you are now enduring the consequences. This is the answer of the book: how shall I test it? By taking it to my consciousness. My heart is its own witness on the subject. I *know* that my ways have been perverted; I *know* that when the right has been before me, I have deliberately chosen the wrong; and now that the book tells me that I have lost my centre, my nature confirms the testimony, saying, This book has put into language a feeling which I could never adequately express.

"I inquire again: What is the destiny of man? Is he but as a leaf that buds, and blooms, and perishes? Is the grave the full stop of this strange difficult literature of life? Can Nature tell me? Are the withered leaves the answer? To me the inquiry is intensely interesting and exciting. I have seen men die, and little children vanish like bubbles on the stream. Where are they? Where are the beings so patient in suffering, so self-oblivious in love, so self-reserved in power and joy? I ask Nature; but she is silent. I study her processes, but they are only partially analogical. I reason, speculate, and desire; amidst all this the book says—Death is but the shadow of life; the grave is not a goal, it is but a changing-place; there shall be a resurrection of the dead; mortality shall be swallowed up of life; death itself shall die! What shall I do with this answer? Do with it as I did with the others. Does it meet my *necessity*, does it satisfy my *hope?* It certainly does so. Nature did not touch the question, but the book answers it with fulness and emphasis. It sheds light precisely where light was most needed, and such light I cannot allow to be extinguished. The heart would sink in dismay but for this revelation of the meaning of death, this light upon the mystery of the future.

"Then I revert to the sinful tendencies of my nature. Can they be overcome? I should be deceiving myself if I pretended to have thought and acted always in harmony with principles which I know to be right. Being my own judge, I pass sentence against myself. I own to having thought bad thoughts and done bad deeds; and the question presses upon me how such thoughts and deeds are to be taken away, and how the disposition to repeat them is to be annihilated. I feel that men are trifling with me when they say that I have *not* been bad, *not* been false to myself, *not* been unfaithful and ungrateful towards God. Under those circumstances I go to Nature, but she is dumb. I ask her if she grows one plant whose juices are good for moral healing, but in her Gilead there is no balm. I ask if she has any holy fountain at which hearts can be cleansed, but she mocks me with unsympathetic silence. I am not idealizing when I speak of human guilt; it is a fact; the stain is broadly marked upon every man, the tokens of a great fall are

strewn upon the whole expanse of society. The book meets the difficulty. When I ask, Is there any cleansing for man? it answers—There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. When I ask, Can sin be borne away? it answers—The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world. When I ask, Can the disposition to commit sin be destroyed? it answers—God will put His Spirit within man, and make him perfectly holy. Thus I get from the book answers which I cannot get from Nature. Every question lawful to a finite agent has been anticipated and answered—answered so as to meet the immediate necessity, and yet so as to give promise of fuller revelation according to the expanding capacity of man.

"Now look at the difference between your position and mine. You say that you worship in the great temple of Nature; but Nature leaves the *deepest* questions of your heart without an answer, it finds death an enigma and leaves it a mystery, it sees you weeping but has no power over the fountain of tears, it observes you looking wistfully to the future but never withdraws the veil. Now, on my part, I pass through Nature as through a porch to the inner temple of revelation: there, provision has been made for every question which bears upon character, condition, and destiny; and I beg you specially to observe that such provision has been made in revelation *alone*. I have no choice in the matter; it must be either the Bible or nothing—either *this* light, whatever the degree of intensity, or darkness which makes life miserable. Seeing that the Bible speaks so directly to my deepest nature, however much of mystery there may be about some of its words, and seeing that if I part with the Bible I part with *everything that touches my most urgent necessities*, I have concluded to regard it as an authoritative answer meanwhile to all the problems of man's spiritual constitution."

In this manner I laid down a few starting-points for our second conversation respecting the Bible, taking care to make the position sufficiently general to avoid dogmatism, and purposely *personal*, so as to give me the advantage of direct witness to the truth of the doctrines affirmed.

My friend answered: "I see you begin your inquiry from the point of consciousness, and not from what may be called a literary point."

"Just," I replied, "as a hungering man would begin with food which had been placed before him, and not with agriculture or physiology. A man must be directed by his necessities. Now I *wanted* answers to the questions which I have just put, and therefore I anxiously examined the replies of this book. My most urgent questions were not about the heavens and the earth, but about my own nature—what am I, whence came I, whither am I going? These questions were uppermost, and by its answers to *these* questions

—and not by its method of dealing with other subjects—I felt that the book must stand or fall, so far as my spiritual nature is concerned."

"Well," said my friend, "my own position with regard to the Bible is that it is a very wonderful book, that it contains many beautiful things, things we cannot get anywhere else; and I think we should deal with it eclectically, taking out what is good and leaving what we don't believe. That is my creed: is it unreasonable?"

"First of all, then," I replied, "let us see exactly how much of the book we are prepared to keep; we shall go into the inquiry, if you please, as men who are really *anxious* to know ourselves and our probable destiny. Now will you tell me, so far as you can recollect, what the doctrine of the Bible is respecting the origin of man?"

"The Bible says that God created man, made him out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

"Very well; now have you any better solution of the origin of the human race?"

"Why there is the development theory," my friend answered; "animal life rising to more and more completeness and dignity."

"Well," I said, "not to turn off into ridicule, which it would be easy to do,—will you tell me on which side the greater difficulty lies, the side which says that man is an improved edition of some lower animal, licked into shape through long ages; or the side which says—*God* (whom you have admitted to be all-powerful and all-wise) created man? Merely looking at the question as one of mystery: there is, we allow, mystery on both sides, on the side of development and on the side of creation; but on which side is there less of mystery? Remember that even this lower life, out of which man is said to have been developed, must *itself have had an origin.* We cannot take the doctrine of development back beyond a given point; we must stop *somewhere*, and wherever we stop we have (apart from a revelation) an insurmountable difficulty. Now merely as a question of *mystery*, not as a question of *truth*, on which side is the greater difficulty?"

My friend answered, "There cannot be any hesitation about that. I have, so you say, allowed God to be all-powerful and all-wise, and when I am told that He made man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, I see nothing in that which is inconsistent with omnipotence, or which indeed is incompatible with natural reason."

"That, however," I answered, "was merely a preliminary question; will you now say what *Nature* tells you about the spiritual constitution of man? You have the heavens and the earth to read, now say what they have told you about man's *spiritual* being."

"I don't know that the heavens and the earth, as such, have thrown any light upon man's moral nature."

"Well, then," I continued, "will you recall your impressions about the Bible upon this matter? To bring the subject to a point, will you say of what *quality* God made man's spiritual nature, according to the showing of the Bible?"

"I understand that God made man's nature like His own; and as He is good, no doubt He made man good: that is how I understand the case to be put in the Bible."

"And is there anything unreasonable in this?"

"Certainly not."

"Then will you say further how the Bible accounts for the fact that man did not *remain* good? As a mere matter of fact, we know that man does commit evil, and what I want to know in the meantime is, how the Bible accounts for human sin."

"The Bible says plainly that man disobeyed the instructions of God; but what I cannot understand is, why God should have made a being who was *capable* of falling."

"That is perfectly clear," I replied, "but that subject must be reserved for separate discussion; we shall come upon it before our inquiry is concluded. Now therefore, if you please, clearing the field of all subordinate matter, let us come at once to two or three testing questions: you have the great fact of human sorrow to account for; what is the *best* answer you have ever heard to the enigma of grief? Or, to put the question in another form, can you give a better answer than the Bible gives, viz., that human sorrow is the fruit of human *sin?* We have become so familiar with that view of the case, that we are apt to overlook its originality; what I wish you to do is, to forget as far as possible all discussions, difficulties, and prejudices respecting that answer, and to look at it as an answer just given,—sin the cause of sorrow, the universe taking up arms against its rebellious occupants. Have you any better solution to suggest?"

"I know," replied my friend, "that sorrow is a fact; and when I attempt to reason upon it from a natural point of view, I cannot believe that it is the result of *good* behaviour. If ever I say an angry word to my child, it is because he has been doing something wrong; I never frown upon him when he has been doing right: so that if I take my own family government as the basis of inference, I should say that all suffering is directly or indirectly caused by false action on the part of man."

"Very well, then, that is the explanation of the Bible respecting the misery of the world; you say it harmonises with your own consciousness, it finds an echo within your own heart. Now take another point: you

referred in our last interview to the death of a child ; death is a mystery to natural reason : standing by the side of the grave, I wish to know if this is the end of man, or if there is anything beyond. The Bible said to you, when you buried your child, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven ;' and I now ask you whether you have ever heard a better answer to the mystery of death ?"

"It is an answer which pleases me," said my friend ; "I like to think of my child being in a world of perfect purity and happiness : I revolt at the idea of so much beauty and loveliness as were embodied in my child being lost in the grave. I find no fault with your answer ; if true, it is the best answer of all."

"You say, 'if true;' in the meantime we are walking in the light of consciousness, not of verbal criticism ; what I have to ask, therefore, is whether your *heart* does not respond to the announcement as one which meets its deepest desire ?"

"My heart delights to think that the child is living, and living in perfect bliss ; but this perplexing question will thrust itself upon me : Cannot the consciousness which *approves* also *create ?* Throughout the whole argument you have been judging by consciousness ; but I feel as if the faculty which approves might first have created the very things which it does approve, and that thus our answers to sorrow and death, and all the phenomena of life, may be simply poetic conceptions, strong wishes expressed in authoritative language."

"I am glad of the suggestion," I replied ; "it proceeds upon a great principle, and introduces us into a most fruitful field of argument. I do not hesitate to attach very high importance to the speculative power of the human mind ; it is, in fact, to this speculative power (comprehending within its range the anxieties and aspirations of the *heart* respecting a true solution of life and destiny) that Divine revelation addresses itself. It is, in fact, the point at which God and man are able to meet in spiritual conference, and apart from which man is a mere animal. I want you to understand me very distinctly in this part of our argument, because some rude inquirers have apparently run away with the notion that Divine revelation and human thinking stand on opposing planes, and consequently that so-called Divine revelation seeks to thrust itself upon the human mind as a foreign and insoluble element. Now, to my thinking, the very term *revelation* implies a capacity to *receive* what is revealed : to a blind man you cannot reveal a colour ; to a dog you cannot reveal a work of art ; there must, in some degree, be correspondence of *quality* between the mind making the revelation and the mind receiving it. The power of intuition is the characteristic glory of man. Now, all this I do not merely admit—I fervently insist upon, and claim as the distinct standing ground of the Christian advocate. With

regard to your suggestion, that human consciousness may have *created* the doctrines which it approves, the answer already given seems to me to be perfectly satisfactory."

"What was the answer?" said my friend; "for the moment it has quite escaped me."

"You remember," I continued, "that in our last interview you suggested that the Bible might be viewed as a work of imagination, a parable, a poem, and that we agreed—at least, so I understood—that this could not be so, for the obvious reason that the Bible *lays claim to too much* for that suggestion to be true. The Bible claims to be the Word of God; it uses a language which would amount to falsehood and blasphemy, if it were but an effort of human genius; and, therefore, unless we are prepared to discard the Bible altogether, we must give weight to the special claim which it insists upon."

"Then," said my friend, "in what light are we to regard the doctrines of the pre-Christian thinkers? I find gods in Homer; I find immortality in Plato; I find virtue in Aristotle; and I find something nearly as high in morals in many heathen writers as I find in the Christian writings. What do you make of these things?"

"Allow me," I replied, "to say that you do not sufficiently recognise the value of a most important admission which I have already made, viz., that *man's power of speculation is his characteristic glory.* I hold the Bible doctrine, that man was created in the image and likeness of God, that for a time he held loving communion with his Maker, and that after the moral crisis called 'the fall' he retained, in a ruined condition indeed, the great faculties with which he was originally endowed, and that ever since he has been as a blind man, groping his way back to the starting-point. Old echoes still linger in him; old forms of beauty still seem to float before the vision of the bewildered brain; he retains broken memories, half truths, partial recollections, and in his more earnest moods he has so put these together, as many a time to touch the sublime reality by coming within the very shadow of God. It is to be distinctly remembered that God never left Himself without witness in the thoughts and hearts of men. No doubt Plato and Aristotle had visions of truth which others did not see, and were the interpreters to their contemporaries of the most advanced truth of their age. The labours of Plato and Aristotle are not to be undervalued. On the contrary, they are to be held in high esteem, not only for what they are in themselves, but specially as demonstrative of *a great want* which the heart has continually but ineffectually been endeavouring to supply."

"Then," said my friend, "will you point out the difference in value between the speculations of the philosophers and the statements of the Bible?"

"Before doing so," said I, "pardon me if I ask a question. A common acquaintance of ours saw you in company with a stranger a few weeks ago, and he told me that from your manner you seemed to have something upon your mind which made you look unhappy: he said he was afraid you had sustained some pecuniary loss, or some bereavement; but the manner of the stranger had so much of indifference about it, that he hardly knew what to make of the case. He once thought you were trying to persuade him to some course about which he was undecided. May I ask, if not intruding on privacy, what are the facts of the case?"

"The fact is," my friend replied, "that I was stating some of my usual religious difficulties to him, and pointing out to him the importance of giving attention to deeper questions than those which usually occupied his attention."

"Now then," I said, "will you be kind enough to point out the difference in value between the statement which I had heard, and the statement which you have just made?"

"The difference is this, that what you had heard was simply a guess or speculation, but what I have told you is the fact of the case."

"Precisely so; and that is the answer to your own question. Throughout the old philosophies you have bold guesses, daring speculations, sublime imaginings; yet nowhere have you *certainty:* but in the Bible you have 'Thus saith the Lord,' and thus you have thrown upon you the responsibility of rejecting a testimony which at least professes to be from God, and not only so, but which answers the deepest questions of your moral nature as they have never been answered before, and by so much vindicates its claim to be considered Divine. Now will you tell me what your recollections of my argument are? Kindly put it before me, as if you were putting it before a third person."

"What I have understood you to say is this:—That God, who is all-powerful and all-wise, *could,* so far as mere power is concerned, have made a revelation of His will; that as He has provided for man's body, it is not unnatural that He should provide, with at least equal care and bounty, for man's mind; that man has deep wants which he has been seeking to supply by various speculations, guesses, and hypothetical doctrines, all of which leave the wants very much as they found them, yet all of which testify to a nature that *needs* a revelation, and is *capable of receiving one;* that there is a book which professes to be such a revelation as man requires, which answers the deepest problems of human nature as they have never been answered before, explaining the existence of sin, showing how it is to be forgiven, shedding light on the mystery of the grave, and opening up visions of the world to come; and all this it does, not conjecturally, but with an authority which, if not valid,

is the most audacious demand ever made upon human credulity. That is what I understand you to have said."

"Your summary is right; what I wish to be specially remarked is, that *this is an argument founded upon the constitution of the human mind.* We have not entered upon any literary argument at all; I undertake to produce voluminous, and to my mind satisfactory, evidence of a purely literary nature regarding the authorship, the consistency, and the validity of the numerous productions which constitute the Bible; but I look upon this as a very subordinate work: a book may be perfectly consistent, grammatical, and even fascinating, yet it may not satisfy the heart; on the other hand, a book may be rugged, ungrammatical, and so incomplete as to appear on a superficial view to be self-contradictory, yet it may penetrate, quicken, and enrich the soul. My inquiry begins from the higher point,—What is the relation of this book to the human mind? How does it address itself to human necessities? And being satisfied on these points, I leave inferior considerations to come up afterwards."

"Then do I understand you to mean," my friend interposed, "that to you there are no mysteries in revelation? Is everything perfectly straightforward and easy of explanation?"

"I mean to say," I answered, "that there are as many mysteries about the book of nature as there are about the book of revelation, and that if I were to adopt your method of objection, I should repudiate the book of Nature altogether; from your stand-point I should say that anything more unreasonable and more contradictory than the book of Nature cannot be imagined. Now, to show this I will, if you please, personate a novice in physical science, and begin by asking you what makes the sun go round the earth? Now answer me as you would answer your own boy."

"The sun does not go round the earth; the earth goes round the sun," I should answer.

"Do you mean to say, then, that the earth moves?"

"Certainly the earth moves."

"I deny it: it is perfectly motionless; I cannot see it move; I cannot feel it move; I cannot hear it move. Do you think I can believe anything which directly contradicts my own senses?"

"You cannot understand all this yet," I should say. "You must get on with your simpler learning, and by-and-by you will better comprehend the teachings of learned men."

"All very fine; but no learned man will ever persuade me that seeing is not believing. How far is the sun from the earth?"

"It is said to be ninety-five millions of miles."

"Nonsense; why we can see the sun, and yet we cannot see the very

next town, which is only twenty miles off, and there is not a single hill on all the road! No, no; it will take a very learned man to persuade me that the sun is farther from the earth than Edinburgh is from London."

"From these remarks," I continued, "and a hundred others which a novice might make, you see that the natural senses are sometimes contradicted or defied by natural objects; that much study is necessary to comprehend some of the universally-accepted dogmas of science; and that a man would soon make a fool of himself if he went by nothing but his own five senses. Now let us suppose a man who declined to study practical agriculture because there are mysteries in scientific astronomy! In such a case we should have a mean opinion of the man's common sense. Or suppose he would not risk the sowing of seed because he did not understand why decomposition should precede germination! In such a case we should probably deem the man insane. Now what I want to impress upon you is, that throughout all life we are bounded, limited, by great mysteries. Nature itself is a great enigma. Your own physiology is yet an unanswered riddle. The atmosphere is an unexplained problem. Light has secrets to tell, which no man has been able to elicit. Yet you reason thus: 'There are certain things which are plain to me; the earth *does* bring forth fruit; the atmosphere is charged with elements necessary to animal and vegetable life; light is essential to growth, and indispensable to the discharge of every-day engagements: about all these things there are mysteries which I cannot answer, yet I avail myself of their practical advantages, and wait for solutions of difficulty.' In thus reasoning I think you take the course of a wise man. With regard to this book," laying my hand on the Bible, "I reason thus: 'I have many and urgent necessities as a moral being; questions press upon me which Nature cannot answer, and which Reason cannot set at rest. I want to know many things respecting myself: Am I an atom, tossed by winds which rage without law? Am I being borne on by a fate which is irresistible, or is my life a plan conceived by a wise and beneficent Power? What is there beyond? What kind of morning, if any morning at all, rises upon the night which men call death? To all these questions the book replies, and its replies go more deeply into my nature than all the speculations of philosophers, and they are given without any marks of hesitancy or uncertainty, plainly stating that they are from God, and throwing upon me the terrible responsibility of rejecting or accepting them. I cannot reject them. I feel like a voyager in a boundless sea, who if he leaps from the vessel, leaps into the stormy deep without any resources but his own poor strength and skill as a swimmer. There are many questions I should like to ask, but enough is plain for my present necessities;

there are many veils I should like to withdraw, but there are open beauties more than I have yet fully appreciated. I could not bear a full sight of God; the blaze would strike me blind. What is given I shall keep. I value it for the very mystery which overshadows it, for God must be veiled so that the lustre do not destroy the vision of His creatures.' This is my conclusion. *If I give up this book, what will you give me in return?* I have tried all you have to offer, and found it wanting. If there are mysteries *with* the Bible, there are ten thousand times more mysteries *without* the Bible. Availing myself, therefore, of your own argument, I abide by this written revelation."

After all, said I to myself, when my friend left me, what have such men to give one in place of this Book? To take it away is one thing, but to make it up by something as good is another. Allowing that no book can ever fully show us what God is, or ever make it impossible for us to ask hard questions (and these two things I admit most fully), yet that is no ground for setting the Bible aside. The writer must always be superior to the writing: the Inspirer must always be more than inspiration; yet the writing may be of the highest value in a given combination of circumstances, and until it can be replaced with a completer statement, it must be held as treasure given us of God for the saving of our life. Suppose that I see in the window of a cottage overlooking the sea a candle lighted for the benefit of sailors, and that I say to the tenant of the cottage, "Because this candle is not the sun, I will blow it out," my objection would be a simple absurdity. Or, here is a little child with a letter from his father, written in words of one syllable, and in great letters, suitable for so young a reader. Suppose I say to him, "Child, this is not such a letter as your father would have written to *me*, and therefore it is impossible he can have written it to *you*," would not such reasoning show me to be neither a logician nor a man? I cannot but feel that there is a gracious adaptation of the method of the Bible to the incompleteness of the human mind. There is evident restraint in the revelation. We come suddenly to a pause in directions which the mind would willingly pursue—the brightness of many a prospect is modified by unexpected clouds—many an answer seems to be broken off abruptly—the proportions of some things appear to be exaggerated;—in all these difficulties I find rest in the infinite wisdom of God. He who made the mind, and who knows us better than we can know ourselves, will suit the light to the organ which has to receive it, and save us from revelations which, however flattering to our vanity, would exhaust our strength and destroy our rest. We shall know more by-and-by, when we exchange the printed page for the Living Presence.

The City Temple.

A Parable

ON REVELATION (*continued*).

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DELIVERED

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, JANUARY 27TH, 1870.

WHEN my friend returned, he brought with him a sceptic of a very advanced rank—a man altogether wanting in veneration, whose dogmatism was such, that only by the severest self-control could I preserve the barest semblance of courtesy. The man was afflicted with the incurable disease of faith in his personal infallibility: he knew everything; he saw through everything; he despised everything; he himself was the principal fact in the universe, and his opinions were the decisions of supreme wisdom. One wonders how such a man ever came into existence in this disorganized condition of society, but having unhappily been so ill-treated as to be brought into it, there need not be any wonder that he should be satisfied with the favourable contrast in which his own wisdom stood to all the folly of a giddy world. It was quite an early effort of genius on his part to throw the Bible overboard altogether, and one of his first accomplishments, which he displayed long before he was able to work for his living, was to sneer openly at his father's wild habit of conducting morning and evening worship in the family. When quite a boy he tried to make verses, which would never rhyme, in ridicule of a set of dangerous individuals whom he mysteriously referred to as "the cloth;" and before he had, in general opinion, but not in his own, arrived at man's estate, he had turned his back on all places of Christian worship, and sallied forth into what he called "the temple of Nature," that he

might throw into discord the sweet music which God intended to be the accompaniment of a higher psalmody. Nothing was so clear to his discerning mind as that everybody was wrong in most things, and that where they happened to have one spark of wisdom, they would instantly allow his superiority as a thinker and his right as a lawgiver. He was not to be classed with those modest persons who are always apologising for being in existence, nor with any other persons whatsoever—he was *himself;* to that proud designation no embellishment could be added by the most liberal and fertile ingenuity.

It was only because my friend was glad of some one, who had a stronger will than his own, to rest upon in the extremity of his distress as a religious thinker, that he sought the occasional companionship of this eminent dogmatist. In point of disposition they had nothing in common —the one was a reverent doubter, the other was a surly and vulgar disbeliever, who kept incessantly and incoherently harping on two or three difficult points.

"Why did God create a being that was capable of falling? Why did He not make man so that no temptation would have any power over him? He creates a being who is capable of falling, and after he has fallen pronounces a curse upon him. I say, this is unnatural and unreasonable."

And he looked as though he did believe what he said. For a moment I took no notice of the remark, knowing that coolness is essential to success in such uncongenial encounters. Having taken ample breathing time, I replied:

"Man could not have been good, if he could not have been bad; strange as it may appear, the two things go together and are inseparable."

"*Prove* that: how do you make it out?" the disbeliever instantly responded.

"In this way," I replied, softening my tone so as to throw his into contrast, for there is nothing so vulgar as the rasping voice of ignorant dogmatism—"In this way: goodness is not a negative quality; it is not the mere absence of badness, but the dominion of the soul over vicious forces. Goodness, when applied to moral agents, describes a moral quality; when applied to inanimate objects, it describes mere adaptation. For instance, we may speak of a good *man* and of a good *house,* but the term good has not the same meaning in both cases."

"True enough," said the sceptic; "but why did God make man capable of falling? Keep to the point, if you please."

"Because," I replied, "God could not have made man upon any other

condition: He made the sun incapable of falling, and all the stars incapable of falling; but the moment you pass from matter to life you multiply your danger; increased life means increased risk."

"I don't see that," said the sceptic.

"Do *you* see it?" I said to my friend.

"Partly; but pray illustrate it."

"I drive a nail into this piece of wood to hold some article until I return for it; I also request a child to watch another article for a time. On my return I find the nail where I put it, I also find the child where I left him; do I say to the nail, 'You are very good for doing what I wanted to have done?' Certainly not. But I may say to the child, 'You have been good, and I thank you for doing me this kindness.' But why not express my thanks to the nail? Simply because the nail had no will in the matter. The child *had* a will, and could have foregone his charge; and by so much as he could have broken his promise he was honourable in keeping it. But put the case the other way. Suppose that on my return I discovered that the child had abandoned his position; then I should see that in passing from matter to life I pass from comparative certainty to probable uncertainty; yet even the bad child is greater than the nail, for his capacity of badness is also his capacity of goodness."

"But suppose that the child had not been capable of running away, that he had been inclined to goodness only, and that no thought of evil could by any possibility enter his mind, would not that have been better?" inquired my friend.

"Then," I replied, "he would not have been a child, he would have been merely a tool, *a thing;* for all goodness implies the exercise of will, and will is a term which involves the possibility of double action; where there is no alternative there cannot be any will."

"But why did God put that tree in the garden to tempt the man?" the sceptic somewhat fiercely demanded.

"First of all," I answered, "He did not put the tree in the garden to tempt the man; and secondly, in doing as He did, He did what you do in your own house and business every day."

"That I deny altogether; will you explain what you mean, and prove it?"

"You have a family?"

"Yes."

"Do you set any limits to the liberty of your children?"

"Of course."

"*Why* do you limit their liberty?"

"Because they are children; they have not come to years of discretion; but Adam was a man not a child."

"True; so let us take the case of a man; take your own case, in fact, and let us see what ground you stand upon. Are there any limits to your own liberty?"

"Yes, there are many limits."

"Will you state a few of them?"

"Why there is property; of course I cannot innocently take another man's property. There are laws of health; if I go beyond a certain point I am punished for my intemperance. There are social and commercial obligations, which, if not honoured, would keep a man down in society. In fact there are many limits to my liberty; but what have they to do with the case of Adam and that hateful tree in the garden?"

"I wanted to bring out, first," I replied, "that *children* are limited by a higher will than their own, and that *men* also are limited by certain laws and forces, partly beyond their control, and partly also of their own ordering and appointing,—that men limit one another, purposely and necessarily; otherwise society would be disorganized."

"Well, and what bearing has all this upon the tree in the garden?"

"A bearing," I continued, "which I would express in this way: all higher life must limit life that is lower than itself; man limits the inferior animals which he employs in his service; the parent limits the action of the child because of the child's ignorance and inexperience; the employer limits the sphere of the employed, making appointments, fixing times, and requiring services; the aggregate man called society limits the individual man, determining boundaries, forbidding trespasses, and enforcing penalties: so that all through life we ourselves do precisely in our degree what God did in the case of the first man. Now, when you bade your child beware of the fire, or the water, or the edged instrument, or the dangerous place, why did you put the temptation in his way?"

"I did not put any temptation in his way," the sceptic answered; "it was for his own good that I warned him not to go too near the fire."

"Very well," I continued, "when you tell a man not to eat this and not to drink that, because they are poisonous or hurtful, why do you put the temptation in his way?"

"I do not put the temptation in his way; it would be for his own safety if I warned him."

"Very well; now when society says to a man, You must not go over this line, or break down that fence, or disturb your neighbour, or endanger the health of your fellow-citizens, why does the tyrannical

power called society point out so many forbidden trees? why should not all men please themselves, go where they like, and live without law?"

"Because life would not be worth having; our security is in law. But why could not man have had full permission to eat of every tree of the garden?"

"Simply because there cannot be two infinites; and where there is an infinite and a finite, the finite must receive its regulations from the infinite. Now you make too much of the merely literal term 'tree;' the question, however, is not one of a mere tree, it is a question of the relation of the finite to the infinite, of the creature to the Creator; it is quite possible so to dwell upon the word 'tree' as to become insensible to the great idea which it represents: that idea is one of order, of right relationship; there was, and ever must be, something which man *might* do, and something which he might *not* do; and this fact of his moral constitution was represented (whether figuratively or literally is not the question at this moment) by his relation to a particular tree. To point out a particular tree as one not to be touched under pain of death may appear to be arbitrary, but in reality it was a most gracious arrangement. Man—as a finite creature—could not have had *all* power; at some particular point he must be given to feel that he cannot go any farther, with safety to himself, and it was better for God himself carefully to define the limit, and the result of trespass, than to leave man in ignorance, and allow him to pass unknowingly beyond the prescribed line."

"But why should there have been any prescribed line?" the sceptic persistently reiterated.

"From the very necessity of the case," I answered; "not as an arbitrary arrangement, not as a capricious test of the new-made heart, but from the very necessity of those relations which the creature must ever sustain to the Creator. The moment you increase the number of beings you necessitate arrangements of gradation, order, superintendence, mutual care, and responsibility. When God created the first angel, an order involving duty, obedience, and limitation was established; there must be a forbidden tree in all created life, in heaven as well as on earth. We have the same principle, I repeat, in constant operation in common life, and we could not suspend it for a day without reducing society to chaos. When you say to a child, You may touch everything in the room except the fire, you point out a forbidden tree; when you tell an apprentice that he may look into every corner of the warehouse except into his master's private desk, you point out a forbidden tree; when you insist that your expenses shall be kept within your income, you point

out a forbidden tree; when you regulate your eating and drinking, strictly keeping them within certain limits, you point out a forbidden tree; every order you give, every sum you fix, every appointment you make, goes upon the very principle of the forbidden tree. You cannot get away from this principle; it lies at the very root of all individual discipline, it is the prime necessity of all social life. In talking about the forbidden tree as you are now doing, you are proceeding upon a false principle altogether. You suppose that God set a trap for man——"

"Exactly so," said the disbeliever, "that is precisely what I complain of—now answer *that*."

"Your supposition," I continued, "is not merely incorrect, it is *insane*, according to my reading of the facts. The great principle, as it seems to me, which is represented by the tree in the midst of the garden, is the principle of *self-control*, and the prohibition imposed upon man involves, not a *threat*, but a *warning*. When you tell your child that if he puts his hand into the fire he will be burned, you do not *threaten* him, you *warn* him, and your word should be accepted as an expression of love; so, when the Creator told the creature not to overstep certain boundaries because such trespass would result in death, He did not *threaten* man with punishment, He mercifully pointed out the awful *consequences* of a given course. In some cases a man punishes himself, in others he is punished by society: you may punish a man for breaking your house, but he *punishes himself* when he puts his hand into the fire; and this he does far more surely to himself than you can do to him; he may break your house, and by dexterity may escape punishment—he may run away, he may defy you to prove his identity, he may cause innocent men to be criminated—but when he puts his hand into the fire, the punishment is instant, personal, and irresistible. It is so with our relations to God; they are so ordered that the consequences of sin cannot be eluded; we *punish ourselves*—we actually carry the tormentor within us."

I was proceeding in this manner when my friend, addressing himself to the sceptic, said, in a reflective yet animated tone:

"I see now what I never seem to have seen before; I see that man's own nature is the best interpreter of God's: I have always been looking at God and God's book entirely from the outside, never through the medium of my own nature."

"Precisely," I exclaimed; "that is the secret of much doubt and discomfort in a man's religious experience; but if you will look narrowly into things, you will find that man in his little sphere often does what God himself does in His infinity."

"But," the sceptic interrupted, "could not man have been so made as for it to have been an impossibility for him to fall?"

"No; I say again, *No*. By so much as a man is finite, by so much is he fallible."

"Then why did God *make* creatures who might possibly fall, and who, if they did fall, must suffer such horrible agonies?"

"That is for God himself to answer," my friend interposed; "I believe Him to be all-wise, and though I cannot understand why He made man at all, yet I will not doubt His wisdom. I think if we deem ourselves clever enough to criticise the very Being who created us, surely the Being who made us thus wondrously clever must be wiser than any of His creatures. Our own ability is one of the best testimonies to God's wisdom."

I had great joy in my friend, as he said these words, and could not but feel that sometimes even "the wrath of man," the very coarseness of unbelief, such as was painfully before us at this moment, drives the higher order of mind to the affirmative side of truth.

"Besides," I added, "we may look at this question also from a human stand-point. You said that you have children?"

"Yes."

"Do you educate them?"

"Certainly."

"But is it not generally understood that the more highly any man is educated the more is his capacity of pain increased? The untaught, uncivilized barbarian suffers less than an educated citizen: why, then, do you expose your children to the possibility of enduring much pain?"

"Because," said he, "if they make a right use of their education it will increase their happiness. If an uneducated man has less pain, he has also less pleasure than a man who is educated."

"That admission," said I, "grants the whole argument which I am anxious to maintain. The very fact that man is capable of enduring such 'horrible agonies,' as you say, is itself an evidence that man is capable of proportionate joy; and, using your own words, I would say that if man makes a right use of his opportunities he will realize all the gladness of which his soul is susceptible; but observe, all depends upon the relation in which a man sets himself towards his opportunities."

"There is another point, too," said my friend; "if you had a figure fashioned in the form of a child, made of marble, you would have a child incapable of suffering. But would you *care* for such a child? Or take it in another way: suppose you had a child which no rebuke could ever pain, which no fire could ever burn, which no knife could ever cut—an unimpressible insensate clod; would you not think that such a child was more than a monster? Now the point which our Christian friend wishes to illustrate is, that the gate, so to speak, by which pain enters

is the very gate by which pleasure enters, that a man's capacity of suffering is also his capacity of enjoyment."

"Well, but what I feel," said the sceptic, "is this: it seems to me that man could not help falling; he was fated to fall, and as he could not help it, it was too bad to punish him for doing what he could not help doing."

"Then," said I, "you simply make out that man is a fool; now remember that *you* are a man, and let me put a question or two to your reason and conscience; when you go home to-day you may find that your servant has stolen some of your property; will it satisfy you to learn that your servant is of opinion that she was fated to be a thief, and that she could not help stealing your goods?"

"No; but then I did not *make* my servant, and God *did* make man."

"Truly so; and for that very reason you should be the more lenient to your servant. Why don't you say—'This woman did not make herself; she cannot help her organization; she was fated to be a thief; if she had made herself I should have punished her; but as she did not make herself, I will pity and forgive her?' why don't you talk in that style?"

"Or," my friend suggested, "why have magistrates and judges? The practice of common life condemns the theory of the fatalist; why should not the magistrates say, 'These prisoners were made by God; they were fated to be felons; let us commiserate their awful fate, and put up as well as we can with their felonious courses?'"

"Quite so," said I; "or put the same thing in another form: on your way home a man knocks you down and uses you brutally; would you say, 'Poor fellow! he was fated to do it; he could not help himself; he must be faithful to his peculiar organization:' would you talk so? You could not talk in this style, unless your doctrine were so far true as to prove that you yourself were fated to be worthy of such treatment. Now, instead of talking about man in the abstract, or the first man, fix your attention upon *yourself:* there are two courses before you; in leaving this house, you may leave as an honest man, or you may secretly appropriate some of my property: do you mean to say that you really cannot help taking something which is not your own?—mark my words, '*really cannot help it*,' have no *will* in the matter, you are literally *compelled* to be a thief?"

"Certainly not; I am not so far gone as that."

"This, however," said I, "is not a question of being 'so far gone:' it is a question of *nature*, not of *habit*. Now answer this question: would you allow the plea of fate to save any man from the punishment which theft, or murder or forgery, or embezzlement deserves?"

"Of course I should not; it is due to society to punish the criminal. But my point is this—when the criminal goes before God may he not charge upon his Maker the peculiarity of his constitution, and reproach his Maker for having allowed him to be placed in circumstances which overbore him?"

"My answer is—Certainly not. The criminal will not, upon sober reflection, do that even now. He may have a fatalistic creed, and by long habit may have come into a desperate condition of depravity; but take him before he has become the slave of his habits, and press him solemnly with the inquiry—*Have you no power to resist the temptation to commit crime?* And as a simple matter of fact he will at least hesitate before pronouncing himself a mere machine; and by so much as any man has even *the power of deliberation* as to which of two courses he will adopt, by so much he bears practical testimony to his responsibility. Mark that: *even the power of deliberation;* if he has any faculty of calculating chances, any *choice* between this plan and that; if he can think, arrange, alter his plans, enlarge them, postpone them, or modify them in any degree whatsoever, then by so much he proves himself a responsible being, and responsibility is irreconcileable with fatalism."

"Besides," my friend suggested, "something is due to the testimony of universal consciousness; the whole heart of society goes directly against the doctrine of irresponsibility: all social instincts cry out against it; it is not tolerated in the family, or in business, or in magistracy, or anywhere; it is an insult to human nature; it gives the lie to our personal consciousness."

My friend spoke with warmth, and as it appeared to me with truth which could not be gainsaid. The sceptic then shifted his ground, commencing his attack from this point:

"But why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? What have *we* to do with the sin of the first man?"

"The innocent must always suffer for the guilty," was my reply; "it is a necessity of all related life. I undertake to show that *you* would do in this matter precisely what you condemn in the government of God."

"How so?" said the sceptic.

"If you had a man in your service who had forged your name to a document, what course would you adopt?"

"I should bring him to punishment, certainly."

"But suppose the man had a wife and family dependent upon him, would you not for their sakes pardon the offence and continue to employ the man?"

"Certainly not; for many reasons, too: *I* have also a family to provide for, and if the man were to repeat his offence he might in time

bring ruin upon me and my house; besides, as we have said already, we owe it to society to punish the criminal."

"But if you deprived the criminal of his employment, would you not cause his family to suffer?"

"Certainly; but he would be responsible for that."

"And if, in addition to depriving the criminal of employment, you imprisoned him, would not his family, perhaps his yet *unborn* family, suffer in some degree for the sins of their father?"

"No doubt of it."

"Have we not, then, in the outworking of common daily life this vicarious principle in constant operation—the innocent suffering for the guilty?"

"Yes, we have, as a mere matter of fact; but could it not have been otherwise with advantage?"

"Certainly not; just see what purposes such a principle serves, or might serve; it shows the unity of human life—no man lives unto himself, humanity is a chain, and from link to link a common influence runs; it shows the influence of human action, and should proportionately *restrain* men from evil courses; it developes the best instincts of human nature, causing man to consider the effect of his conduct upon others, and educating man upon a basis of true socialism, lifting him out of his contracted individuality, and making him a responsible member of a universal family."

"In addition to that," my friend said, "it ought to be pointed out that there is an equitable principle in the whole arrangement; it does not operate on one side only, as the objection which has been started would seem to imply; if the innocent suffer for the guilty, the guilty enjoy advantages from the innocent; and if children suffer for the evil deeds of their parents, they also reap the benefits of a good parentage. This is not a one-sided arrangement at all. If a man disgraces himself in business, his children will suffer; and if he honours himself in business, his children will reap the advantage. I think this ought to be pointed out, lest it should be thought that the argument is all upon the side of suffering."

"Well, but," the sceptic said, "look at the case of a little child who is in pain: it cannot express its wants: day and night it may be in torture; what has that little thing done to deserve such agony? Is it not enough that men should suffer for their own sins, without suffering for the sins of other people?"

"We have answered the latter question already," I said; "it is impossible to confine the influence—whether good or bad—of moral actions to the actor. If you do a vicious deed in your family, it may tell

upon the character of your children, and if you do a good deed it may ennoble and inspire them. With regard to the child suffering, we must be careful not to exalt a sentiment into a law: man must be given to feel the necessarily terrible consequences of sin; and in some cases, as the penalty of sin has come through the parent to the child, so the check upon sin has passed from the child to the parent. Many a man has been benefited by the sufferings of his child; he could not have been reached in any other way, but such suffering has brought him to reflection and contrition."

"Well, little children could have been spared suffering at any rate," said the unbeliever.

"Then you make out that you are more anxious about children than God is," said I; "and a man should be very careful how he exalts his own sentiments of compassion above God's. Besides, your own reasoning comes to this:—'God made me; He created all this generous feeling towards little suffering children; He has actually made me more gentle and compassionate than He is Himself; I am more Divine than God!' Yet you confessed a moment ago that you would punish the man who forged your name, though his wife and children would suffer through his sin!"

"Yes," said the sceptic, "that is all right so far as the world is now constituted: according to the present constitution of things, I confess that events must go pretty much as you have hinted; but what I want to know is, *Whether the world could not have been arranged upon some totally different plan, so that we might have escaped these things?*"

"Upon that subject," I said, "my mind is at perfect rest. God made the world; God is the author of human nature; God is infinitely wise; what I cannot understand now I may be able to understand hereafter; as a creature of limited powers, I deem it right to defer to the understanding of God. Life would be a poor thing if we had no mysteries to quicken our mind, or no difficulties to engage our powers——"

At this point my friend looked as if he wished to say something; I gave him the opportunity, and he said,—

"I have been thinking about suffering children; I recollect what you said to me on the occasion of our second interview. You said that, if I had known it, there was a letter for me on the death of my own child, and that the letter said 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Now I have been thinking in this way: a child suffers and dies, but all children, if your creed be right, go to heaven; if they live to be men they may, also assuming your creed to be true, risk the opportunity of doing so, may in fact go to perdition: now, on your ground, may this not be looked at as a compensation?"

"Certainly," I replied; "no child is damned on account of his forerunners' sin; as a necessity of his relation to those forerunners he must in many ways suffer, as he may in other ways profit; but so far as the future world is concerned, no child, no man, suffers for any sins but his own. Then think of Jesus Christ in relation to little children; He loves them with all His love, pronounces the kingdom of heaven to be of such, and takes them from their sufferings into rest and joy."

"I must say I like that idea," said my friend.

"Well, gentlemen," said the unbeliever, "you may sentimentalise in this way if you like; but for my part I shall follow the light of science; this is the age of science; everything must give way to science; and, depend upon it, science will overturn your antiquated and preposterous religious beliefs. Why, just look at a recent discovery: a scientific man has shown that all physical life has a common basis; if you microscopically examine the broad end of one of the little spikes, if I may so call them, which grow upon the leaf of a nettle, you will find in it precisely the same germ or base which you will find in a drop of human blood, clearly showing that we are all merely natural growths—now *that*," he added with much self-satisfaction, "is the kind of positive teaching which satisfies *my* mind."

"But not mine," I replied. "Pardon me for saying that you treat your science very unscientifically. Take the case of the nettle. I might say a word upon the difference between the terms, 'physical basis of life,' and 'the basis of physical life:" the former is intensely dogmatic, the latter is correct. But I don't pause upon this point; I rather ask you, what about the *other* end of your nettle spike? In the case of man we have a 'nettle' that can sin and suffer, that can plan great projects and carry them out, that can write poems and paint pictures, that can write books and make laws, and it is *this* end of the 'nettle' that I wish you to think about, and it is to *this* end of the 'nettle' that the religious argument addresses itself. Christianity does not seek to analyse your blood but to save your soul; Christianity does not forbid you to study science, but it urges upon you considerations which involve the destiny of your being."

[The concluding paragraph is omitted for want of room. It is a summary and application of the Christian argument.]

The City Temple.

A Parable

ON DEMONIACAL POSSESSION.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER.

DELIVERED

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 3RD, 1870.

PICTURE to yourselves a man of lofty stature and beaming countenance, one of the noblest specimens of the human race—strong, dignified, majestic. Think of him sitting at the door of his dwelling as the summer sun is glowing in the far west, having around him a group of loving children, who delight to call him "father," and vie with each other in many playful attempts to rouse him from an unusual fit of silence. They have never feared him; his approach has always added to their joy; they have ever hung upon him with undoubting trust and love. They had good reason to do so. Probably he had no superior in the country of which he was the pride. When strangers passed him, they turned to admire his towering stature and kingly carriage. Nor was there one sign of repelling haughtiness upon his noble face; at the sight of a little child it would expand into a luminous smile, and a tender concern would sadden it when in presence of tottering old age or incurable pain. It was no act of constrained courtesy, or pretentious condescension, on his part, to pick a wayside flower for an unknown child, or to guard infirm travellers from the dangers of the busy thoroughfare. What he did, he did with charming naturalness; what he said, he said with manly simplicity. No honest man ever had occasion to fear him; no unjust person could feel quite easy in his presence. A kind of

spiritual sunlight seemed to accompany him, which not only caused his own character to stand out with perfect distinctness, but gave unexpected revelations of the character of others. His domestic life was a scene of happiness: adored by the wife of his youth, loved with all the love of his children's hearts, he was at rest in his house as a man without a suspicion or a fear—so strong, yet so tender; so mighty to defend, so gentle to console; courtly enough for the society of princes, simple enough for the plainest of his neighbours: his very presence was an inspiration; weak people felt that his strength was their own, young men set him before them as their ideal of manhood. One look would convince the observer that, to physical advantages of the highest rank, he added intellectual powers of no mean order: the form of his head, the steadiness and lustre of his piercing eye, the lines upon his face, showed that he was no stranger to careful and exciting thought. He had, indeed, long been accustomed to the kind of thinking that always brings suffering in its train—not cold speculation, but study that troubles the heart with many a bold assault upon its most valued trusts. There is a style of so-called thinking which is merely a mental amusement; there is also a thinking which strains the heart to the point of agony. The rugged lines cut into that solemn yet glowing face showed how much the heart had been engaged in this man's thinking. In many a lonely wandering in the deep ravine, and over the rocks which lay within easy distance of the splendid metropolis in which he resided, he had watched as if for an angel which should tell him Divi secrets, and had prayed to be saved from the delirium which comes of intellectual trespass upon the sacred provinces of God. Death had visited his house, and twice turned the cradle into a coffin, and he had not forgiven death for that great sorrow. The problem of Providence—the government which turns into a tormenting enigma the course of every-day affairs—he vainly attempted to solve, for he did but find in every answer another and deeper question. These experiences left their mark upon him: they ennobled, yet saddened, the expression of his countenance, and threw into his voice a chastened and pathetic tone. On the evening referred to he had been sitting at his door for most of an hour, in a silence which the mirth of his children could not thoroughly break: whilst looking at his little ones he seemed to be looking far beyond them; in answering their questions he seemed to be listening to unseen interrogators; and when his hand was put out towards them, it seemed as if an invisible power was pulling it in another direction. Only the sunset before he had sat in the same place, calm and even joyful—to-night he is as one hovering on the brink of a troubled world, through whose shadows he can see nothing of light.

I.

Having this morning sanctified his house by praise and prayer addressed to the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, he proceeded to engage in his customary work. Tender was his adieu to his household—not, perhaps, in reality tenderer than usual, certainly not intentionally so—yet, in the gloomy days which soon came upon her, his wife recalled with mournful satisfaction the pathos of his farewell. She knew that he had spent many hours in painful and fruitless endeavour to understand the ways of God amongst the children of men, and now and then, with all the skill of that blessed love which speaks from a distance that softens its tone to the ear of pain, she had sought to remind him of the manifold practical blessings with which human life had been enriched, and which should protect the mind from the insidious temptation which comes from the side of mystery. His recognition of these blessings was most grateful and emphatic, yet he turned from the light with anxious desire to dispel every shadow which lingered on the way of God. This morning his prayer was hardly free from implied reflection upon the government of the world, especially upon the permission of death to destroy the life of children; still there was nothing in his tone to indicate an unusual state of mind, or to excite uneasiness or apprehension. The mystery of the world had been to him so long a burden, that those who knew him best had ceased to wonder at the melancholy which shadowed his worship. On his way to the confines of the city, where awaited him the engagements of this particular day, a mighty wind suddenly arose; now it wailed as if in pain, and then it roared as if in defiance or triumph. For a moment it became subdued, and instantly it rushed in shattering shocks, and tore the trees which clothed the deep ravine, as if the very spirit of vengeance had been let loose upon them. No other traveller was in sight, yet a voice distinctly addressed the lonely man:

"Bitter, infinitely bitter," said the Voice, in a whisper, which chilled him.

He paused: he looked, but there was no sign of a presence. He turned his eyes to the cloud which had just thrown a shadow over him, but no figure gave it shape or meaning.

"Yes," continued the unearthly Voice, drawing, if possible, still nearer the astounded man; "accursed be His power; may His throne fall and His sceptre rot. Amen—amen," it groaned, in a stifled manner.

The man, though brave and fearless in all the ordinary relations of

life, was stricken with horror; hot drops started from his brow, to be followed quickly by a chill, which made him shiver. With parched and reluctant lips, he could only say:

"Who—what——"

And as he spoke it seemed as if heavy wings were softly flapping in the now quiet wind.

"Sitting there," continued the ghostly Voice, in the same sad tone; "sitting there with His feet upon the humbled world, seeing men perish and devils suffer, yet never spending a thought of mercy upon them; pleasing His vanity by making suns and blowing them out, keeping up a treacherous peace in His stately halls by driving away the noble angels that ask a question or suggest a doubt. O—O would I could strike off the pillars of His proud throne, and bring him for one hour into the lake of fire!"

The Voice seemed to be nearer still, speaking not only in the ear but in the very soul

"Poor men—poor men; praying to a God who never hears them."

The lonely listener was bound to the spot, though anxious to move. He was under a spell which he had no power to break. The Voice was mightier than an arm.

"Man," said the Voice, with fuller emphasis, "speak freely to me and thou shalt be safe; I will comfort thee at least with such poor comfort as we can have so long as *He* drops the poison of His sovereignty into the fountains of the universe. I will watch thee, I will comfort thee, I will show thee where alone thou canst have a moment's rest. I will lead thee to a spot on which *He* seldom deigns to look, and which is therefore blest. Tell me, O man, though thou art strong in body hast thou not had sorrows which darken and weaken the soul?"

The listener was dumb: self-control was utterly lost.

"Yes," continued the voice, "thy silence is right; we know thee well; thou hast had sorrow upon sorrow, even to the breaking of thy heart; thou hast no fool's brain, yet often has it been on the point of madness when thinking upon *His* crooked and unequal ways."

Suddenly there was a sound in the air as of much subdued yet mocking laughter, and in unconsciously turning, as if to see whence the sound proceeded, the eye of the traveller descried the dim outline of a procession moving towards the tombs.

"Again, again, and every hour," the voice continued; "see yonder, O man; knowest thou those that mourn? Knowest thou what they carry? It is their only child—their idol, and *He* allowed the little life to perish, whilst He was occupied in receiving the applauding hallelujahs of a servile host that would slay Him if they could. We saw the child

die; we counted the bitter tears of those who loved him; we pitied but could not help the sufferers; and there they now go to lay on the banqueting-table of Death the very treasure of their hearts;" and as the Voice so said, the fiendish laughter was repeated.

"Thou rememberest, O man, when thine own little girl died?"

The listener fell to the ground, as if smitten by an irresistible arm.

"Thou dost; thy love hath an imperishable memory; that same night I was near thee; I saw thee again and again fall upon thy knees in a secret chamber, and I heard thy sobbing prayer to Him thou callest God. It was a useless prayer; He was making suns, and banishing angels, and raining fire into the bottomless pit, and doing other mighty things that better become a God than drying human tears. He could have spared thy little girl; she might have been with thee to-day." Again the air was shaken by a mocking sound, and the poor man clung to the dust as if in fear he should be borne away.

"And thy brightest boy, too, I remember; when he died I was there; I saw thee smile at the child to comfort him, when thy manly heart was breaking with grief. I saw thee retire to wring thy helpless hands in mortal agony, and then come back to smile at the child; I knew how much that smile cost thee; I saw all the wonderful display of thine innocent hypocrisy, and I blessed thee for it. *He*, too, saw it, but He came not to thy help; He looked coldly down through the courses of the stars, and allowed thee to suffer on through all the dreary hours; He was playing with the lightning, He was marshalling the timid angels in eccentric order, He was showing His craven idolators how grand a thing it is to be a God."

By this time there seemed to be a great number of invisible presences in the yet wailing, though less tempestuous, wind. The Voice continued, as if its complaint would never end,—

"They who know nothing of Him call Him *Father*. I say it is a lie. He can see men lose their property, lose their children, lose their reason, and spend their days in drivelling idiotcy or raging madness, and never cease His star-making, His angel-taming, and His comet-driving. Could I pluck yonder key of hell from His fiery girdle"—[here the legion shook in concert with helpless rage or rekindled ambition]—"O could I, could I escape that hateful eye that follows me everywhere! Did He but sleep one hour in a hundred years, I would steal upon Him in His slumber, and He should be God no more; I would sit upon His throne, and men should be blessed, little children should never die, no orphan should be found in all the earth, for tears there should be light and peace. Would that I were God!"

"Shall we dwell with thee, O man?" said the Voice, after a momentary

pause ; " we will guard thee ; we will share thy griefs, and take nothing from thy little joy ; we will help thy thinking, and guide thee to right conclusions."

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Suddenly, in the very fulness of his strength, his countenance glowing with unnatural animation, the lonely man stood erect, and with frantic energy demanded—

" Who speaks to me of my girl in heaven—of my dear boy with God ? "

But there was no change in the low, dull tone of the Voice. " Heaven," it said, " there is none for thy children, poor man, deluded by the hope that has mocked all ages ; they die, and are as the glittering insects that perish ; thou thinkest of them as winged angels rejoicing in the unclouded light. Alas ! thy thought is but a dream ; thy children are in yonder tombs, they are not in heaven."

" Lie, lie, cruel lie," screamed the frantic man, " what I hear is a lie ! Rachel is in heaven ; Benjamin is in heaven ; my children are as angels in God's house !"

" O man deluded," said the Voice, " I tell thee, tell thee sadly, thou livest in a mocking dream ; we pity thee, yet we teach thee truth ; thy little children, dear for ever to the memory of thy love, are as lights blown out ; thou couldst not find them in all the chambers of His blazing creation. Hear us, O man, hear us, and be wise. We know Him better than He can be known by the creatures of yesterday who call themselves men. Ten thousand thousand years have we watched Him from afar ; He is a great God, making worlds that He may crush them, creating hearts that He may break them, kindling fires that He may torture all whom He dislikes : we have watched His ways through unnumbered ages ; for unnumbered ages we have shivered at His footstool as unwilling suppliants ; for unnumbered ages we have been crushed by His ponderous foot ; it is only for want of equal strength that we have so suffered ; our *spirit* is yet untamed ; we hate His presence, we resent His rule, and though He makes our hell intolerable, we delight to curse Him to His face. Seest thou yonder pool which men call a sea ? It is but a drop compared with the mighty waters with which we are acquainted. Oh, to have seen what our pitying eyes have beheld on those stormy deeps—husbands and wives, parents and children, crying through the tempest that *He* might come and help them, and just as their thrilling prayer reached the point of agony, a thundering billow has dashed the vessel into ruin, and the voice of prayer was heard no more,—*this* is God,—*this* is Father !"

The wind ceased, and as it subsided another Voice said—

"We will return to thee, and comfort thee, at the time of the setting of the sun."

II.

There has been great commotion in the city to-day. Men who never spoke to each other before have been seen in deep conversation, and men who have long been mutually estranged have been brought together by some absorbing event. Groups have been suddenly formed, and suddenly dispersed. Little children have spoken to their parents with premature seriousness, and parents have gathered their children to their hearts with more than ordinary tenderness. The whole city, in short, has been roused, and all its customary movements have been checked by a most terrible paralysis.

"Poor man," said an aged speaker, "I saw him almost flying in the direction of the warm springs, and God mercifully grant that I may never again see such an expression on the face of man."

Let us walk through one of the city thoroughfares, and learn what we can from one or two of the many excited and ever-changing groups.

"Never, never, did I see such a sight; poor woman, so young, so beautiful; her heart-breaking cries were intolerable; she insisted on throwing her arms around him, and in the most pitiful tones she asked if he did not know her—and did you ever see such a look as he gave her? Oh, those eyes, those eyes!"

"And as for his *strength*," said another, "we were like little children in his hands; we threw fetters and chains upon him, but he snapped them like threads, and flung them from him with a fiendish yell of laughter—when we spoke to him about his children, he lifted his clenched hand and shook it in the face of the sun, and then he roared like a beast of the forest."

"And so good he was to us all," said a white-haired man, bent by the burden of many years; "he never gave me an hour's pain, and when his mother lay a-dying she blessed him for an obedience that never wavered. He never caused sorrow to her who bare him: O my son, my son! would to God I had died before this day!"

"We are but at the beginning of trouble," said a grave-looking man, in a firm and reproachful tone, "I have foreseen this,—it does not take me by surprise; I forewarn you all—we have fallen on an evil time—man cannot blaspheme with impunity."

"Explain, explain; keep silence that he may explain!"

"To explain is easy," continued the undaunted speaker. "I met the infuriated man, and to me he unintentionally revealed the awful secret of his madness."

See how eagerly the crowd presses upon the speaker—how breathless is the silence!

"I was returning from the warm springs this morning, when I saw an excited figure approaching me; the head was uncovered; the hair was dishevelled; the eyes were like the balls of a tiger. The man came quite near me; he put his face close to mine, and through clenched teeth he said, with burning breath, in a long, hissing tone, '*Jesus Christ*,' and then passed away like a flying dart."

"Let the deceiver be destroyed," said many voices, "lest we and our children perish."

"He *must* he destroyed," continued the speaker, "or we shall fall under the just judgment of God; He will not give His glory unto another; it hath grieved me, as one who humbly sitteth in Moses' seat, to see how all the world hath gone after this deceiver, and how many of yourselves have given heed to his blasphemous doctrines—he is of that wicked One."

"Say not so," exclaimed a poor woman, whose eyes showed too plainly that to sorrow she was no stranger—a woman often called a "sinner."

"Enough!" said an earnest-looking man, "we do but waste time in useless words: we must arise and pursue the suffering man, and see if he can be recovered to those who love him, to his venerable father and his crushed children. Are there not in all the city twelve men who will, in the strength of God, give themselves to the work of finding and taming this infuriated sufferer? I have known him from his youth; much did he trouble his mind with questions too high for creatures of a day; often he broke out into sudden prayer—he seemed to see the invisible; the hard question was never out of his thoughts, yet many of us knew of his kindness to the poor"—[here there was a subdued murmur of approbation in the little crowd];—"and I am sure there must be twelve men in this metropolis who will give themselves to seek his restoration: that there be no confusion among us, hear me further—The man was seen by many in the street that is called Straight; he was traced to the dangerous side of the rocks, and when the most humane men dared not further follow him by reason of fear, they heard a cry among the tombs which caused their bones to tremble: among the tombs we shall surely find him this day—who will go, hoping in the blessed God to be saved from all evil?"

"What about his home?" inquired an unknown voice; "he may return, and slay those who love him."

"Let his home be watched by strong men," said the speaker; "his

wife and chileren must be guarded, for nought is so terrible as the madness of love."

"Let him see his children, and he will be recovered of his plague: Jesus Christ loves children," said a young woman who carried her first-born in her arms.

"No, no," said the lost man's father, "that will never do. His poor children would not know him. I can never forget their scream when they saw him this morning; they will not be calm for many days—Oh, my son, my son!"

III.

How sadly the days and weeks passed in the darkened home of those who most deeply mourned this heavy affliction can never be explained. In that gloomy abode there was but one topic of conversation, and all griefs were forgotten in the one absorbing sorrow. Life was no longer a joyous progress; it was but a dull oscillation between the happy past and the dreaded future. It was long before the children had courage to pass the threshold of the home which had now become a prison. Often in their innocent sleep did they shudder as if in alarm, and by day many a piercing question was left unfinished lest their mother's spirit should be utterly overwhelmed. Too soon did those little children learn the art of self-restraint in their mother's presence—too soon was it laid upon them to find a hiding-place for many a question in their own suffering hearts. Yet, time brought a measure of healing to the children. Little by little they felt prepared to play in the sunshine; little by little they yielded themselves to the cheerfulness natural to their tender years, though they never quite escaped the shadow of their mother's abiding grief. No sunlight ever penetrated that cloud; it turned her life into one continuous and most melancholy night. Do not all great changes come suddenly? Does not God try us and strengthen us by the apparent abruptness of His interpositions? Morning comes gradually, and night comes by an appointed course; yet God often comes as if in haste, and not seldom arises upon us from unexpected places.

"Oh, mother!" exclaimed one of the children who had been playing at some little distance from her home, "Oh, mother! I have seen our father; he will be here in a moment."

Instantly every precaution was taken to guard the house; and a low wailing prayer escaped the poor woman's trembling lips as she gathered her pale and quaking children around her. The little messenger had given no false alarm, but, instead of the shattering blow which was expected, the door was touched by a gentle hand.

"It cannot be father, dear," whispered the mother; "I must ask who it is."

The answer was given in a manly and most pathetic voice—

"Let me come in, my blessed ones—have no fear—I have seen *Jesus*, and He has made all things new!"

The woman's love—oh, so divine, so inexhaustible is that pure love—admitted of no suspicion: in a moment she was locked in her husband's mighty yet gentle embrace, and his children clung to him, and screamed for very joy. Yes, it was he; the clear eyes were full of the brightness of love; the manly voice was the richer for the emotion which made it tremble; there was no sign of painful thought on the open brow; he seemed to be invested with the freshness and bloom of renewed youth, and to have gotten the victory over the fear of death.

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"Blessed be the Christ of God!" sobbed the poor woman.

"Yea, blessed for evermore," said the recovered man; and a befitting silence fell on the weeping, yet grateful and adoring group.

* * * * * *

"Oh, to have seen Him is heaven! You cannot tell how dear He is to my heart. Often men sought me, but their very kindness seemed to be selfish. I thought I saw hypocrisy in their very earnestness; but when *Jesus* spoke to me——;" and the rest was said in many tears.

* * * * * *

"I wanted to remain with Him—to keep close to His side—never to be out of His sight any more; but He said to me (and oh, it was so *like* Him), 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.' These are His blessed words."

"And ever blessed be His dear name," said the poor woman; "He has been thy Saviour and mine."

"And blessed be the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who has sent His son to save poor men. Jesus tells of no new God. He says God is love, and that God would not willingly let any man die. Oh, you should see Him and hear Him, so beautiful is the expression of His countenance, so tender and so grand are the tones of His blessed voice!"

"And Jesus himself sent you to us?" the thankful wife inquired.

"Yes, or I never could have come. The devil took me away and Jesus sent me back. The devil would break up all happy homes, and Jesus would make all homes happy. The devil put bad thoughts into my mind: he made me suspect God's goodness; he pretended to sympathise with me in the great sorrows we had endured; he made me great

promises, and I madly believed him. . . . . Thou canst never know what I have suffered. Thou hast never wandered through the cold, cold chambers of death. Thou knowest not the torment of hell. . . . . ."

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The rejoicing wife had many a question to ask. Gladly would she have known all the bitterness of the cup which her husband had drunk; yet, as a wise woman, she never made one reference to the awful past. She ever spoke of the bright future, and never did her tone give suspicion of despair. She was to her husband as another Saviour. She listened well, and when explanation failed, she pondered the mystery in heart.

The youngest of the little children was as attentive as the rest; the large tears stood in her dilated and glowing eyes, and when the narrative ceased she said, with a pathos mighty in its simplicity—"*Dear Jesus.*"

An aged man, tottering on his staff, came into the house, and comprehending at a glance all that had happened, paused for a moment—for a moment only—and then said in stifled tones, "This my son was dead and is alive again!"

IV.

A great crowd is gathered in the market-place. We have no difficulty in discovering the cause of the tumult; the Scribes and Pharisees are in controversy with the disciples of Jesus Christ, and the argument is going heavily against the illiterate and immature Christians. Learned allusions to the prophetic record have confounded the disciples, whose ignorance has drawn down upon them the contempt of the crowd. Every attempt at reply has been received with mocking laughter, so much so that the courage of the disciples is clearly declining. But see! A noble figure rises above the crowd—there is evident determination in that grand face; and the voice, why, it peals like a trumpet—hear the man:—

"Rabbis, holy priests, learned men, suffer me to speak. I shall not attempt to compete with you in the sacred learning which has been the special duty of your lifetime, but I ask you, *Have you seen Jesus?* Have you met Him in any deep affliction? Do you know His tenderness, His love, His power? Hear me, ye grave and venerable men; hear me, ye trifling and clamorous youths. I speak not of hard books, or of studies which try the mind; I speak of my own life, and as a man redeemed from the power of the enemy, I solemnly demand to be heard."

"Speak on," said the crowd, touched by the heroism of the speaker.

"I was possessed of a legion of devils; day and night I prowled among the tombs fiercer than a beast of prey. I have cut myself with stones, and wallowed in my own blood; my life has been set on fire of hell; iron could not bind me, scourges could not tame me; my wife's love was turned into terror, my blessed children fled from me as from an incarnate devil, which indeed I was. I know what it is to be without God and without hope in the world; to be branded of God, to be shunned of men, and to live on the desolate border-land between earth and hell. Under these circumstances no Scribe came near me; no learned man pursued me in the perilous way; no Pharisee found my dreary retreat; but this same *Jesus*, whom ye have reviled in my hearing, met me, and His blessed face was as the rising of the sun. At first His beauty was a torment to me, all the hell within me recoiled from the lustre of His righteousness; but with mighty and gracious power He rebuked the devils that possessed me, and when He had cast them forth, causing them to flee before the lightning of His omnipotent word, He healed and comforted me, and I said with our sweet singer, 'Thou restorest my soul!' I would have remained with Him, and been His grateful slave all the days of my life; these hands should have worked for Him; these feet should have run at His bidding—but, hear me ye scornful men, and let your scorning be turned into prayer—did He seek such compensation for my healing, did He demand my presence as a sign of His power, or a tribute to His personal glory. When I clung to Him, and prayed to remain with Him for ever, He said, 'No; thou hast friends at home, a wife whose love still goes out after thee in unceasing prayer, children who feel the coldness of the bitterest orphanage, a sorrowing father who desires to be spared to see his son born to him again, go home to them, and tell them how the Lord hath had compassion on thee, and done great things for thee.' O ye learned rabbis, ye saintly men of every name, don't attempt in *my* hearing to to say one word, or breathe one whisper, against Jesus of Nazareth; I owe all I am and all I have to Jesus of Nazareth; He is my light and my salvation; had I a thousand worlds I should pour their unworthy riches at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth; revile Him if you can—heap your corrupting falsehood on His holy name—prostitute your learning to the cause of the enemy—but I charge you before the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and in the presence of the angels that watch the ways of men, that ye never forget that ye have heard this day that one poor slave of the devil owes his redemption and his hope to Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

And no man could answer him a word.

The City Temple.

A Spiritual Vision.

RELATED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 10th, 1870.

Prayer.

Almighty God, do Thou most mercifully lead us into the mystery of prayer, and enable us, whilst communing with Thee in the Spirit, to receive blessings which are suited to our special experiences. It is our joy to believe that Thou knowest our case in all its minuteness and urgency, and that there is nothing in our life which is hidden from Thine eye. There is no difficulty too great for the living God; there is no sorrow which He cannot touch and heal by His infinite compassion and grace. We desire to rejoice in these convictions; we would find in them our constant and abounding strength; when other solaces fail us we would fall back on the mighty succour of these eternal truths; in this way would we have bread to eat which the world knoweth not of, and here would we find a peace which the world cannot take away. Men do not understand one another, men do not understand themselves; we are constantly contradicting our own experiences; we are not to-day what we were yesterday; we cannot find out ourselves unto perfection, and all our attempts to secure blessings utterly fail when conceived in our own wisdom and directed by our own strength. But Thou knowest us altogether; Thou knowest our down-sitting and our up-rising; there

is not a thought in our heart, there is not a word on our tongue, but lo ! O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. We rejoice in Thine omniscience because of Thy loving-kindness ; were Thine omniscience to stand alone, we should tremble before Thee, because of the corruption of our heart and the iniquity of our lives ; but because Thou dost not only know all things, but dost meet us with infinite mercy and loving-kindness, we rejoice that there is nothing hid from the light of Thine eye. We pray Thee to meet us now as an assembly of Christian worshippers who have heard of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and yielded our hearts in reply to its mighty appeal ; we rejoice that we are crucified with Christ, that nevertheless we live, yet not we, but Christ, liveth in us ; and now our heart's desire and prayer to God is, that we may glory in nothing but the Cross, and be constantly desirous to exemplify its transforming power in the annihilation of all selfishness and the creation of a Divine beneficence. We pray that, according to our present wants, Thy blessing may be commanded to rest upon us. Some of us are toil-worn ; we are weary with much distracting thought, our brain is aching, our heart is sad, our eyes are full of tears ; we desire that Thou wouldst soothe our mind, and cheer our desponding heart, and touch the fountain of our tears, that if we weep we may weep for joy. Thou dost pity us in the extremities of our life ; in our great sorrows Thou givest us to feel the gentleness of Thy grace ; in the great struggles of our life Thou givest to us alway the victory ; yea, Thou hast made death as the angel of Thy presence sent to call us hence ; and, if Thou hast impoverished us, Thou hast also enriched us with exceeding consolation. We humbly pray Thee for grace to cast ourselves constantly upon Thee. May we never take our lives into our own keeping ; may we never be the guardians of our own way—self-sufficient, obstinate, proud, presumptuous. In all our ways may we acknowledge God, that our way may be directed from on high. Suffer us not to live unto ourselves, show us our weakness, convict us of sin, bring back the deadly past upon our torturing memory until we relinquish our own sufficiency, and hide ourselves in the mercy and the might of God. Thou hast called us together from divers places into one house ; may we find in this union a hint of the fellowship that is heavenly and immortal. Thou wilt gather Thine own people from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, and will set them in Thy kingdom, which is on high ; and we rejoice in these intermediate fellowships, these temporary unions, as hints of the great consolidation that shall never be broken up. Enable us therefore to enjoy the very spirit of Christian fellowship ; may we be one by reason of a common sympathy with the Cross of Christ ; may we feel

our oneness, and rejoice that in Thee we shall be one for ever; and do Thou enable us, seeing that we do enjoy this holy fellowship, to remember, in all our lower intercourse with one another, that we are the sons of the Lord God Almighty, and that much is expected of us, as the adopted and the anointed of the Lord. In all business relations may we be simple, upright, truthful, honest; in all misunderstandings may we be generous, magnanimous, noble, forgiving; may we hasten to speak the word of penitence, and to offer the pledge of peace; and in all our intercourse with one another may we desire to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Enable Christian men to be Christians to one another, confiding, charitable in construction of misunderstood conduct, never thinking any evil, ever hoping all good; and may we thus show that we are no longer under the dominion of darkness, but are the children of heavenly light; and when we fall into divers temptations, when our feet well-nigh slip, when our robes are in danger of being spotted by the world, forsake us not, suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able. Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that we are dust; when the enemy would come in like a flood, lift up Thy Spirit as a standard against him; when he would seize upon us in a moment of special weakness, let Thine omnipotence interpose between our frailty and his assault, and verily we shall stand strong. Put within us Thy Holy Spirit, sanctify us altogether, work in us all the fulness of Thine own purity and Thine own love; and may our life be so transfigured, so elevated and ennobled, that the most unobserving of men must feel the presence of a heavenly power in our whole life, and in all that we do in society. The Lord's blessing come down upon us with special fulness and adaptation to our want and sorrow. Give us an hour's joy, drop into our life some heavenly element, give us to feel in this sacred hour, in this holy-day enclosure that no lion is here, nor any ravenous beast gone up hereon. Give us to feel Thy presence, to rejoice, and sing, and triumph in the abounding of Thy love. Father be our Father, Son of God be our elder brother, Holy Ghost of God be our sanctifier, Thou one living God be our life and our redemption. Amen.

A Spiritual Vision.

Is there not a spirit in man, and doth not the inspiration of the Almighty give him understanding? You know—*you* who have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of—what it is to be drawn into long confidential intercourse by an Interlocutor who *listens* as if he knew nothing, and yet *answers* as if your very heart lay naked before him—an Interlocutor who asks questions that sound the dark depths of your most guarded secrecy, and startles you by replies that fall like flashing light upon the gloomiest passages of your life. Often, indeed, this invisible companionship fills you with deadly fear; yet often, also, it soothes you like a holy benediction. You are made to feel that your intercourse, though in secret, is distinct as thunder, and that the sigh which you would gladly keep from men, becomes loud as the stormy wind in the ear of your spiritual auditor. Men who are accustomed only to the vulgar dialogue of the streets, or the sinister intercourse of the market-place, cannot understand such companionship; they see the movement of your lips but not the attitude of your soul, and believing you to be holding a pensive or fanatical monologue, they bestow upon you a look divided between a smile and a sneer. It is in my heart to speak specially to you to-day—to you who dream even at noon-tide, and know what it is to be alone in the most clamorous crowd. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof; a spirit passed before my face—it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice saying—

"Turn to the beginning of thy days and tell me what thou seest."

"My boyhood," I replied, "is to me but a shadow, yet is there one figure in it still most vivid and affecting—a poor little orphan standing at his mother's knee, asking questions to which she could only answer that her 'staff was broken.'"

"But," said the Voice, "were not wings given to her instead of the staff? And pray thee, which is better, the staff or the wings? Thou art puzzled, not knowing what is meant by wings being given to thy

widowed mother; let me tell thee, then: when we bore away thy father and set him among the angels of God, there came into the aching heart of thy mother such desires, prayers, and aspirations, as she had never known before, and these new experiences were as wings by which she ascended to heaven, and on which she rested until blessed answers satisfied the importunities of her impoverished and wounded love."

"She was answered, then, was she?" I timidly, yet hopefully, inquired.

"Answered richly," the Voice replied; "her heart was suffused with peace, her very countenance was refined and brightened, and thou mightst have seen with how tender a reverence her sad eyes turned again and again to the silent but fascinating sky: that sky became to her as a serene and comforting Presence."

"O good Spirit," said I, "speak still further of this to me—my childhood has waited thus long for interpretation."

"I have access to the Life-book of mankind," continued the Voice, "the book as it is written by God himself; and if thou couldst compare it with the life-books which men write about one another, thou wouldst know how foolish is the wisdom and how selfish is the love of men: the biographer says '*died*,' the Redeemer says '*born*;' the biographer says '*night*,' the Redeemer says '*morning*;' the biographer speaks of the orphan and his loneliness, not seeing the gentle angels sent of God to watch the fatherless child,—the biographer moans over a speck of dust in the churchyard; angels rejoice over a new-born brother. It is with men even as it is with the sun; when one nation is retiring to rest in the darkness of night another is welcoming the morning, so whilst the body is lost in the shadow of death, the sainted soul has ascended to the fountain of life."

"Were we wrong, then, when we said God was unkind in desolating our home?"

"*How* desolating it?" said the Voice. "Dost thou know that God never desolates His children? He only took from you the *physical* form of the man so dear to your hearts: the *spirit* was still near you; nor can men who are yet in the body ever tell how precious are the influences exerted upon them by glorified saints. Men cannot know *enough* of God's movements to enable them to form a true judgment of His ways. We have been with Him age upon age until there seems to be an eternity behind us; we have seen the burial of generations more than we can number; we have been permitted to discover part of the plan of the outer worlds that light the way to a higher universe, which again is but the dim reflection of His resplendent footstool; but the Father himself is

guarded by flaming and blinding light, towards which the first-born of the cherubim may not look but with veiled eyes."

"Alas!" said I, "we measure things by our little day."

"And so measuring them," the Voice continued, "you make great things little and little things great; I cannot explain to thee the mingled sensations which agitate us when we see the vain attempts of men to construct instruments which shall measure creation and discover the number and force of the pulsations of the universe: your chronometers tell you nothing about time but that it is *gone;* your telescopes are impotent devices to reduce the inconvenience of blindness; and your microscopes are the dim windows through which you see but shadows of the under-worlds included in the boundless empire of God."

"Then are we but little children still?" said I.

"And ever will be," said the Voice; "what you who are yet upon the earth call *fathers*, are such only intermediately and temporarily; there is only One Everlasting Father, who grants but a momentary charter of parentage to His creatures, and in the end absorbs and unites all power in His own blessed dominion: we shall always be little, because He can never be less than infinite. Thou thinkest of thy father as if he had right of life in himself, not knowing, else forgetting, that our every pulse is a loan from the One Eternity of the One Life. Now, look again down the shadowy years, and tell me what thou seest?"

"I see a youth with a Book in his hand, which he is about to cast away, none other, indeed, than the Book which claims to be inspired by God: the youth wants a fuller book, he complains that many a question has been left unanswered, and he stumbles in dark places like a benighted traveller; he would throw the book from him, yet an invisible hand is restrainingly laid upon him."

"That hand was mine," said the Speaker; "thou wast in my charge. Men can never know what I may term God's difficulty in granting a *written* revelation of Himself. A perfect revelation to an imperfect humanity would be as a dazzling light poured upon a diseased vision."

"But the youth," said I, "whose dim outline is barely discoverable among the shadows of vanished years, appears to be distracted by the *contradictions* of the Book."

"Because," the Voice instantly replied, "he did not know that contradictions are but separate parts of consistency: day and night contradict each other; so do summer and winter; and every man's own life is full of contradictions, which are often most discouraging to others, and only reconcileable in his own consciousness. Besides, the letter, as the body, must always fall below the demands of the spirit. God's Book is little more than a book of hints; it is, indeed, but the *promise* of a revelation.

Dost thou complain of an acorn because it is not an oak? Dost thou decline to teach the alphabet because it is not a treatise? Dost thou refuse to plant a root because it is not a flower? I bid thee *wait*, and I charge thee to hold fast by present blessings. Knowest thou not in the intercourse of men that even *emphasis* itself is often a revelation? Couldst thou hear God pronounce His own word, thou wouldst find all contradictions reconciled, as the earthly dissonances are refined and harmonised in the heights of the great mountains."

"Then," said I, "dost thou encourage me to consider the Bible as alphabetical?"

"Certainly," the Voice replied; "certainly, an alphabetical revelation for an alphabetical life. Men who are wise in their own conceits talk of the present life as if it were eternity. To me it is given to hear and understand much of the language of the animal world, and thou wouldst smile at many things I hear in that region. Two creeping insects were holding seated conference beneath the mossy pebble that shuts in their little world, and one of them scorned the idea that any living creature could fly so high as a tree, and the other sternly pronounced it *impossible:* two little bright-breasted birds, twittering on the edge of an aquarium, agreed that it was *absurd* to suppose that any creature could exist under water, and at the same moment two golden fishes declared that it was impossible to live out of it—so difficult is it for one world to understand another, or even to believe that there is any other world but itself. Believe me, earth is but an initial state; the Book is an alphabet; the great revelation is yet to come."

"And now," said I, "another vision of the past is before me: I see a youth laying his hand tremblingly, yet lovingly, upon a great cross, and I hear him saying with stifled yet urgent voice, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.'"

"The crisis of thy life," said the Voice, "and many angels rejoiced in it before the presence of God. Thy father saw it, saw it as he never could have seen it upon earth, and no words can tell thee the fulness of his joy. To *thee*," the Voice continued, after a momentary pause arising from my emotion, "the Cross was then a new object; to *us* there is no object so old. Heaven itself is centralized in the Cross—all worlds look towards it; all holy beings render it obeisance; all true service is inspired by it."

"I thought," said I, "the Cross was specially designed for *sinners?*"

"In *one* of its aspects it is so truly," the Voice explained; "but the Cross is many-sided as the universe: it is for the redemption of sinners, but salvation is a fuller term than redemption, and therefore we say that the Cross is for the saving, the keeping, the preservation of all; sinners

go to the Cross to repent; angels go to it to meditate and adore—to sinners it is the way to heaven; to angels it was as the secret of God countless ages before sin was known—men speak of the Cross as historical; angels speak of it as contemporaneous. The Cross will never be taken away, for it is the necessary bond of union between subordinate life and the sovereignty of God."

I had a question to put which caused me to hesitate: it came to my lips, and then swiftly retired to the heart that had urged it; at length, with earnest reverence, I said—

"Do not many men regard the Cross as a sign of the sanguinary vengeance of God?"

"Truly so," said the Voice, "but only because they see it in one aspect, and approach it along the line of a depraved criticism rather than the line of a profound knowledge of *sin*. In the hands of a tyrant the rod is an instrument of cruelty; in the hands of a father it is the medium of loving correction. It was not *man* that suffered on the Cross, but God himself; on the Cross thou dost not see merely a broken *body*, but also a broken *heart;* God did not slay a man, He himself became a man that He might be slain; for only by the shedding of blood could He at once protest against the sinfulness of sin, and assure the sinner of the possibility of recovery and sanctification."

"But," said I, and my tongue well-nigh clave to the roof of my mouth, "But can God *die?*"

"Ah," said the Voice, "thou feelest now the inconvenience of language; we are in a region of thought in which words betray us alike by their feebleness and their ambiguity. By *death* thou meanest the cessation of existence, and herein thou art mistaken. To God *death is the agony of life:* to bring the highest idea of His relation to sin within the comprehension of men who were themselves sinful, and by so much disqualified to follow the sublimity of God's thinking, it was necessary that He should show himself as a man, and become obedient to the death of the Cross; and because He stooped that He might be seen, men charge Him with vindictiveness and cruelty."

"We did not think of death in connection with God," said I.

"No," the Voice replied, "because you know not the nature of death: you think of death as extinction; you apply the word death alike to the decease of a dog and the decease of a man; you say that the *beast* dies; you say also that the *man* dies; your words are thus false by reason of indiscrimination and incompleteness. When seed dies, is it not that it may become fruitful? Doth not the winged butterfly emerge from the torpid chrysalis? Doth not the brightest joys flash from the blackest sorrows? If thou wilt say *God* cannot die, I will answer neither can

man die: the body dies, the shell perishes, the earthly house dissolves, but the *spirit* is untouched by the spear of the destroyer. When a man's child deeply sins against him, physical death would be a solace to the wounded parent; it is the heart-death that ploughs wrinkles on his face and makes him old too soon. On the Cross of Jesus Christ see not a display of vengeance but a revelation of love; deeper than the bodily crucifixion, is the mighty struggle in which mercy rejoices over judgment."

"Could not men have been forgiven without all this suffering on the part of God? Could not the tragic scene of the Cross have been spared?"

"Thou speakest in ignorance," said the Voice, "not knowing all the deep meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the costliest of all deeds. Men can forgive but the injury, they cannot forgive the sin; no sin is confined between man and man; sin touches the whole universe; it ascends to the throne of God, it poisons all the relations of the soul; it *must* do so; the felon may restore the ill-gotten property, but how can he restore his *innocence?* The unrighteous man may cry in the bitterness of his soul, but what detergent can remove the black *stain* from his dishonoured life? No, no; believe the revealed word (often, indeed, mysterious to the feeble reason of shattered manhood, yet true, sublime, and most gracious), there is no way back to holiness *but through sympathy with the redeeming death of the blessed God.*"

"We know," said I, "that sinful men should suffer for their sins, but we see not why the holy God should undergo suffering and death as Jesus Christ did."

"The Holy God," replied the Voice, "must do one of two things. He must, by virtue of His holiness, either destroy sinners from off the face of the earth, and so testify to the absolute and incorruptible righteousness of His government, or He must descend from His infinite elevation, and move His rebellious creatures towards penitence and holiness by setting himself at the lowest point of being, and showing how death may be made the condition of new creatureship. As to His not suffering because He is holy, thou knowest not the nature of holiness. Holiness must either be a judgment or a redemption; it must burn as an unquenchable fire, or yield itself as a reconciling sacrifice; and as to holiness saving God from suffering, know thou that *holiness alone* can truly suffer in the presence of sin; by so much as the heart is holy, is it susceptible of anguish by reason of the transgression of others. Knowest thou not that the *musician* is agonized by false sounds, which are undetected by a hearer who knows not the mystery of music? Are not *artists* pained by lines and hues which mean nothing to the untrained eye? Is not *taste* often

shocked where *vulgarity* is unmoved? It is even so with God. By the infiniteness of His purity does He suffer through the wrong-doing of His children."

"Do not men think," said I, "that Jesus Christ was in some sense the innocent victim of Divine wrath?"

"Truly so," was the instant answer; "but their thought is ignorant and profane. They regard God as merely looking on. To them He is a third party in a tragic process, and they wonder that He should be appeased by the blood of His well-beloved Son. Out of their ignorance comes their sin. God is *not* a third party, He is *one* with His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was *God made visible.* He that had seen Jesus Christ had seen the Father. I teach thee, therefore, that God himself was the Priest, the Priest himself was the sacrifice, and that the sacrifice was the blessed alternative of judgment."

"And this sacrifice," said I, "is the penitent sinner's standing-ground before God?"

"Yes; seeing that God himself was enabled to move from the point of judgment to the point of sacrifice, He invites the sinner to meet Him *there,* and as the sinner enters into sympathy with the Divine attitude, he realizes the hatred of sin and the love of holiness, which show that he is renewed in the very spirit of his mind, and that his apostasy has been succeeded by adoption into the family of God."

"Knowest thou," said I, "of any of the ways of men which would help me to understand this more perfectly?"

"Thou shalt find," said the Voice, "in the outworking of *family life* the clearest hints, though always imperfect and often misleading, of the spirit and law of God. When a son deeply wounds the parental heart by some special enormity, the spirit of *judgment* is necessarily evoked, and so long as that spirit holds the dominion of the parental heart, reconciliation is impossible—not impossible through vindictiveness, but through *righteousness;* but if in the father there be such depth and richness of nature as will enable him to realize the most heart-wringing sorrow on account of violated truth or purity, the son may meet him *in the same spirit*;—meet him in the spirit *of righteousness* he never could; in the realm of righteousness he has no standing-ground whatever; only in the depths of a *common sorrow* can he meet his insulted and dishonoured father."

"But," said I, "if God had *remained* at the point of righteousness, might not the *penitent* sinner have found access to Him?"

"Thou forgettest," said the Voice, "that if God had remained at the point of righteousness, the sinner could not have *lived:* righteousness demands *instant* judgment, 'in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt

surely die;' let thy mind dwell upon this fundamental fact; and see how this urgent demand of righteousness was met by the forethought of love, inasmuch as Jesus Christ was not the transient figure of a day, He was '*the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;*' God was not, if the language of men may be used, to be *developed* by circumstances, He is the same from everlasting to everlasting."

"Another question presses upon me," said I; "are there few that be saved?"

"Whosoever will, may be saved," the Voice replied; and my interlocutor passed away.

Alone, and in a silence that oppressed me, my mind suddenly saw the whole course along which the spiritual visitant had conducted me, beginning with the mysteries of Providence, and ending with the mysteries of Grace. One thing impressed me above others—namely, the perfect *consistency* of the Divine nature; God's way amid the events which make up our daily life is dark and often undiscoverable, so is His way of working out the salvation of men. God never comes to us, as it were, in white light; He rather darts an occasional ray of glory upon us from the pavilion of thick darkness, and by these intermittent revelations our way is to be directed. At no point are we permitted to become familiar with His method; He will show us a star, but we must not touch it; He will cause a flower to grow upon the grave, but will not hand us the keys of death; He awakens many a cheering note in the intertangled and melancholy forests, through which lies the narrow path of our life, but we may not penetrate the sombre and perilous solitudes. This is for the chastening of our ambition, and the training of our strength. We must be still before God. If we understood Him altogether we should no longer be men; we love Him, and therefore grow in understanding. He conducts us, not towards exhaustion, but towards ever-expanding capacities of mind and heart. The oak rises, flourishes, dies; empires are ploughed up by their foundations; the most splendid monuments of civilization wane and vanish; but the renewed mind, the sanctified heart, will grow for ever, unimpaired by wasting ages, finding even in their satisfaction an incitement to profounder worship and wider service.

The cultivation of spiritual studies should be conducted in a deeply religious spirit, lest we pass the boundary, and find ourselves in a forbidden land. We may think, but we dare not press our curiosity upon the secrecies of God. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us, and unto our children, that we may do all the words of this law." It is not enough to *dream* of

God, we must lay hold of Him, as it were, with all the might of our love, and reveal Him to others in the light of a life whose springs are in heaven. To-day I have spoken of visions, yet are they visions full of practical meaning; if I have spoken from within a veil, I have yet sought to speak according to the word of the Lord. Beware of the spirituality which impairs your sympathy with all that is actual in human life; and beware of the materialism which binds you to the dust, and offers you nothing but the grim destiny of the grave. To the listening ear the Spirit will ever speak some word of inspiring hope; let us say, with simplicity of heart, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." He can still speak. His speech of love will never end. His revelation of light will never cease. He will take us into His chamber, and hide us there till the storm be gone; and when it is gone He will open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of His law.

The City Temple.

A Parable on Prayer.

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 17th, 1870.

Do you believe in prayer, as it is described and enforced in the Bible, or have you so many difficulties about the subject as to keep your mind in a state of anxious doubt? As a Christian teacher, I do not consider it wise to ignore the misgivings which agitate other minds, or even to turn a deaf ear to the exceptions often roughly urged by more refined objectors. As "it soothes poor misery, hearkening to her tale," so it often diminishes, and sometimes destroys, opposition to allow it full opportunity of expending its force. An objector who did not always pause to consider the least offensive way of putting a case, boldly said to me, "Your Bible says that 'the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord;' now, one would think that the prayer of the wicked would, on many accounts, be a pleasure to Him."

"I undertake to show," said I, "that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination, not only to the Lord, but also to all men of common integrity; and, to put the matter still more plainly, I undertake to show that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to *yourself*."

"Show it, then; you have an eager listener," my interlocutor replied.

"First of all, then," said I, "we must establish a mutual understanding on one or two points. Will you tell me whether, in the course of your experience, you have ever known any insincere or selfish men?"

"I need not hesitate about that," said he; "I have known too many such."

"But have you ever come into *close* relations with them?"

"Rather too close," was the instant reply; "some of them have wronged me more than once."

"That will do as a starting-point," said I. "Now, suppose that a man who has wronged you asks, beseeches, prays, that you will give him credit, what will be your answer?"

"Show him the door, and help him to it," my interlocutor answered. "Certainly I should. Impertinent rogues! they would not hesitate to come this moment, if they thought they could get over me."

"But why should you thus roughly treat the request? Are they not needy men, and is it not in your power to help them?"

"Of course they are needy men, and needy rascals too; but for such plunderers, I should have been in a very different state to-day. I have no patience with them—not a bit of it: they get up in the morning to plunder, and go to bed again to prepare for it." My interlocutor became quite excited, and so gave me base enough for my argument.

"I see your position," said I, "and it is a sound one; the prayer of the swindler would be an abomination to you, not because it was a *prayer*, but because the man who offered it was still a swindler in his heart, and he was prepared to repeat his imposition on your good nature: is that so?"

"No doubt of it; I would not believe a word he said—far from it."

"Then," said I, "let us take a precisely contrary case; suppose that a man, in whose honour you have entire faith, should ask you to extend his credit, in consequence of his being reduced to unexpected necessity; how would you act under such circumstances?"

"I would grant his request at once; yes, and with pleasure too."

"But why would you do so?" said I; "let us go into the reason."

"Because," said my interlocutor, "between you and me, honest people are not easily found in this upside-down world, and when they are found, they should be encouraged—that is *my* creed;" and so saying, he became radiant with self-complacency.

"I think your doctrine does you credit," said I; "character ought to go for something; but do you know," I continued, "that you are proceeding exactly according to the law of prayer laid down in the Bible?"

"How so?" he quickly demanded.

"You have admitted that the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to you; and in your second statement you have shown that in responding affirmatively to the request of an honourable petitioner, you accept the principle that 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'"

"I never quoted these words," said my interlocutor; "these are Bible words, and I have nothing to do with such language."

"You did not quote them," I answered; "but, certainly, you have acted upon them, nevertheless."

"How so?"

"Simply because your conduct in both cases turned upon the *character* of the petitioner: when the insincere man asked you a favour, you suspected him, because his whole life was a witness against his veracity; but when the honourable man asked you a favour, you responded with cordiality, because you had confidence in him."

"Even admitting all that," said my interlocutor, "we expect more from God than from man. I may not be able to overcome my dislike of the bad man, but we are given to understand that God is full of love, and that makes all the difference between Him and ourselves."

"Your doctrine," I replied, "is only good so far as it goes; but as it does not go far enough, the reasoning on which it is based involves a fallacy. It is true, to use your own expression, that God is full of love, but it is also true that He is full of wisdom—not only is He full of wisdom, He is also full of justice. Now, to regard the bad man's prayer and the good man's prayer with equal favour may seem to be very loving, yet the love would be exercised at the expense of the wisdom and the justice. But even the supposed love itself would not in reality be love, it would be something worse than unreflecting emotion; it would be an immoral and consequently a demoralising sentiment. Then, on the other hand, look at the effect of such an administration upon those who endeavour to live conscientiously towards God; it would put dishonour upon all pure aspirations and all honourable endeavours, and throw moral proportions and relations into utter disorder."

"But," said my interlocutor, "how is God to answer the prayer of the wicked except through the medium of His love?"

"There," said I, "you unconsciously change the attitude of the argument; you must draw a broad distinction between the wicked prayer and the prayer of the wicked."

"Will you explain?"

"Yes; the wicked prayer is the prayer of the man who wishes to be delivered from the mere consequences of his wickedness; he will sin again as soon as the hand of vengeance is taken off him, and insult the very mercy to which he owes his deliverance; on the other hand, the prayer of the wicked may be a prayer inspired by a sincere penitence and an earnest desire to know God's salvation. Is not that evident?"

My interlocutor said, "Yes," with somewhat of hesitation. Noticing the hesitation, I continued: "Let us illustrate the case in this way: here is a prodigal who has exhausted the patience of his father; many a time he has promised amendment, and as often as his father has held out the

hand of forgiveness it has been abused. The prodigal has been driven by poverty and hunger to use the language of submission, and as soon as his selfish purpose has been answered, he has again fastened the 'serpent's tooth' of his ingratitude in the heart of his father. Through a continued course of conduct of this kind his declarations of penitence have come to be among the worst phases of his badness. But suppose that by some means the prodigal was brought to use the language of genuine repentance, and that his father had reason to believe that every word came from a humbled heart, the prayer would indeed still be the prayer of the wicked, but it would no longer be a wicked prayer—do you accept the illustration? Does it afford you any hint of my meaning?"

"Your argument," said he, "is intended to show that God is influenced, so to speak, by the character of those who pray to Him; and you seem to think that it is right that God should have respect to a man's character before He answers a man's prayer."

"Of course I do; and what I want to fix your mind upon specially at this moment is, that you yourself proceed upon the same principle in daily life."

"That is my difficulty," my interlocutor replied; "it is all very well to say what we ourselves do, but we expect to find something different in God."

"And you *do* find something different in God," I answered emphatically. "Not different in the essential principle of right—for what is morally right anywhere is morally right everywhere—but different in the proportion between finite and infinite, between a shallow, changeable, and selfish affection, and an immeasurable and eternal love."

"I confess," said my interlocutor, as if returning from absorption in his own thoughts, "that I have thought it unworthy of the Infinite and Everlasting God to pay more attention to one man's prayer than another."

"But I deny that He does," said I, "in any sense which involves a merely arbitrary partiality; it is not a question as between one man and another, but between one character and another; and you yourself operate upon precisely the same principle, and if that principle were set aside, society would be disorganised and destroyed. Can you point to a single instance in the Bible in which God heard the prayer of the rich man, or turned away from the prayer of the poor? I put the question thus purposely in order to shift the ground from *character* to mere *condition*."

"I do not know that I can give you any such instance," my interlocutor replied somewhat off-handedly.

"But," said I, "I am perfectly sure that you *cannot* give any such

instance; I challenge you to find it. On the other hand, you can find instances in which the poor man has been answered when the rich man has been sent empty away. Yet what I want to point out most distinctly and emphatically is, that the result did not in any degree whatsoever turn either upon the wealth or the poverty of the respective suppliants, but solely upon their *disposition*, and I wish to know from you whether this is not perfectly reasonable?"

Whilst my interlocutor hesitated, I continued—

"You object to the principle that 'the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much,' yet that principle holds good wherever virtue is followed; it holds good in the bank, in the warehouse, in the family, in the school, and in all the relations of honourable life: that principle is, that *sincerity* should be influential, and insincerity should be despicable; in other words, an honourable man should have more importance attached to his words than should be attached to the words of a self-seeking and heartless dissembler; and I contend that an inversion of this principle would upset and destroy everything that makes life real and valuable."

"Then," said my interlocutor, "am I to understand you to lay down the doctrine that God would answer the prayer of the very worst man if that man went to Him with a sincere desire to be heard and answered?"

"I believe so most heartily," said I, "provided that the prayer itself related to a proper object."

"But what do you mean by a proper object?" he inquired.

"I mean the forgiveness of sins, the direction of the way of life, the gift of wisdom, and blessings of that nature; not petitions that are selfish, unreasonable, or out of proportion to the relations which are divinely established between God and man."

"Am I to understand, then," my interlocutor continued, "that there are subjects of prayer that are forbidden? Must men keep within certain lines of request when they attempt to pray? Why should not they ask for anything whatsoever without limitation or barrier of any kind?"

I answered, "There are undoubtedly forbidden subjects of prayer; there are circumstances under which men cannot, with due regard to the sovereignty of God, say more than 'not my will, but Thine, be done:' you must admit that man cannot always see the effect of his own prayers; he does not know all the conditions by which he is surrounded; he does not see the exact bearing of his own circumstances; he does not deal with a complete case, but with a life that is constantly in transition; and a consciousness of his ignorance should cause him to leave the answer wholly to the wisdom and grace of God."

"Well," said my interlocutor, "whatever you may make of this department of the subject, however much you may refine your position until it becomes unintelligible to a common mind like my own, perhaps it will be as well for me boldly at once to say I do not see what good can be done by prayer under any circumstances. Look at this case," my interlocutor continued, as if he had come upon a conclusive illustration: "an atheist sows his fields and reaps a good crop; a praying man, as you would call him, sows his fields, and though he prays for a favourable harvest, and does all his work in a most intensely religious spirit, possibly his harvest may be quite a failure—his harvest may indeed be less than the harvest of the man who never prays at all. What advantage has he? What comes of all his elaborate religiousness?"

"Will you," said I, "allow me to answer one question by putting another? As a mere matter of fact," I continued, "we know that many an honest man has failed in business, and many a swindler has made a fortune. I suppose you allow this?"

"Of course I do."

"What, then, I have to ask—what, then, is the advantage which virtue has over vice?"

"What," he replied, "is the bearing of your question on the subject in hand? I want to see how you bring the two things together, and what argument you are going to work out of them."

"The bearing is this," said I: "broad conclusions should not be drawn from narrow premises. If *all* prayerless men had good crops, and *all* prayerful men had bad ones, there would be some force in your illustration; but as your case is not only singular, but so extremely hypothetical as to be almost impossible, you are not justified in drawing very wide inferences from it. Still, looking at the case exactly as you put it, there may be something said in the interests of prayerfulness. In proportion as the man really and truly believed in prayer and in all that prayer implies, he would have the advantage of further believing that the failure of his harvest had some good purpose to serve; he might, indeed, never be able to discover what that purpose precisely was, yet he would be supported by an undoubting faith that God was in *some* way enriching and strengthening him by the very disappointment. Such a man as we have described does not fix the answer of his prayers, and presumptuously say, 'Unless God shall give me precisely such and such a reply, I shall not believe that there is any advantage in prayer.' He lays his case before God, tells his Father what the desire of his heart is, and is then resigned, if not positively joyous, though his prayer be not answered according to his own shortsighted sagacity or delusive hope."

"But," said my interlocutor, "don't you think that this is merely a sentimental advantage?"

"To you," I replied, "it is undoubtedly a sentimental advantage, because your present state of mind being sceptical, you could not avail yourself of it: the advantage does not belong to men who have taken up an antagonistic position in relation to the doctrine of prayer; it belongs exclusively to the men whose whole spirit takes its tone, so to speak, from the heavenly rather than the earthly, and to whom it is a most substantial and invaluable advantage."

"I confess," said my interlocutor, "I cannot follow you there. All your arguments about my not understanding this, that, and the other, seem to prove that your religion is shut up in a great cloud of mystery, and when we object to your doctrines, you try to shut our mouths by telling us we don't *understand* them."

I was not displeased with this burst of accusation. At all events, it showed an interest in the subject, and by so much it gave me ground to stand upon. I thanked my interlocutor for his frankness, and said, "After all, it is true that the understanding or reverent treatment of mysteries depends upon the state of the mind—spiritual things are spiritually discerned—great subjects are not to be treated in an off-hand manner—scholars are not to set themselves up as teachers—and you and I, however much we may think of ourselves, ought to remember that there is a dogmatism of *unbelief* as well as a dogmatism of *faith;* it is quite possible to be as exacting in rationalism as it is in Christian theology; and I have yet to be persuaded that the men of *no* creed are one whit more liberal than the men whose religious belief is well defined." After thus giving him lecture for lecture, I asked him to proceed with the subject immediately in hand.

"Why," said he, "you praying men are always challenging God to work a series of miracles, or in some way to upset the laws of nature."

"That," said I, "is a bold statement; will you particularise a little?"

"Look, for example," he continued, "at a case of sickness: here is a little child dying, and the mother, a genuine Christian, is praying night and day for its recovery; yet she might as well spare her prayers, for the child dies. Then, again, look at a case of plague: you Christian people go to church and pray for its cessation, and perhaps in the very act of prayer some of you may be cut down; or look at a poor man who is well known to be religious, who is in distress. For weeks or months he has been praying that God would open his way to an honest livelihood, but nothing comes of it all; his children are starving, and his life is daily more and more of a burden to him. Now," said my interlocutor, in a bold, clear tone, "of what use has prayer been in such cases as these?"

"It does not seem to have been of much use," said I; "yet I am not

unwilling to go over the ground you have traversed, and to show you how Christian faith enabled me to look at the subject. Let us come to your two main cases. A godly woman prays that her sick child may recover, yet the sick child dies; therefore, say you, what is the good of prayer? Now, pardon me for saying that your notion of prayer seems to involve the very *dethronement* of God; according to your theory, God should not have a will of His own—the moment He is asked by any of His creatures to do anything, He should do it; now this may be a very pleasing theory of prayer, but it is a most humiliating theory of Divine government. If your theory of prayer were true, one would not ask, 'What is the use of *prayer?*' but 'What is the use of *God?*' You say that the mother prays for the dying infant, but you forget that *both* the infant and the mother are themselves *the children of God;* and what is *our* qualification for saying that God should do one thing and leave another undone? Seeing that both the mother and the child are God's, who are we that we should tell God which of His children He should take *first?* But does the poor mother get nothing for her prayer? Does her supplication end in denial, or in silence which amounts to mockery? Has God no way of enriching the hearts which he bereaves? Is it nothing to have had wrought in the spirit the conviction that it is well with the child? Is it nothing to be brought to the state of mind which regards human life as a divinely arranged plan, in which the sorrows and the joys are adjusted and intermingled with infinite wisdom? You are to observe, therefore, that answers to prayer are given in *different* ways: prayer may be answered, whilst the special petition may not be granted; true prayer does not presumptuously say, 'I must have *my* way;' it says rather, 'Let God be God, the child was *His* before it was mine—not my will, but God's, be done!' And this is not stoical or sullen resignation, it is filial acquiescence; it is the spirit which says that the Creator must know more than the creature. Then again, you say, Christian men go to church to pray for the cessation of a plague, yet while they are in the very act of praying they may be struck by the pestilence; therefore, you inquire, What is the good of prayer? In reply to this bold representation of a case that is barely possible, I say we must know something more about the plague before we can give an opinion about the difficulty; if men pray instead of attending to the common laws of nature, the prayers of the careless are an abomination unto the Lord; if men attend to the common laws of nature and pray also, still they may be victimised by the slothfulness and impurity of their neighbours, and it is certainly no argument against the Divine government that one law is not maintained at the expense of another. Not only so; if your argument proves anything, it proves too much; you are aware that the person who has done

everything in his power to obey the laws of health may fall a victim to an epidemic, and on your principle I should be entitled to ask, 'What is the use of cleanliness or sobriety?' The fields of an industrious man may be blighted, and on your principle we might ask, 'What is the good of industry?' And if the field of a vicious farmer should happen to be fruitful, your theory would permit the question, 'What harm is there in vice?'"

"But apart from these considerations," I continued, "your notion of prayer is little short of an absurdity. You complain of the inefficacy of prayer because every desire is not instantly satisfied; but, as I have just reminded you, if such were the case, the difficulty which is apparently relieved at one end is infinitely increased at the other, because God would be the mere convenience of His creatures, and His government would be reduced to a fiction. Even an earthly parent does not grant all the requests of his children; is it of no use, therefore, for a son to consult his father? A physician does not always accede to the wishes of a patient; is it, therefore, of no service to have medical advice? A teacher often denies the request of the scholar; is it unwise, therefore, to appeal to the teacher, and to be guided by his opinion?"

Whilst I paused for a moment at this point, my interlocutor said—

"The Bible particularly says, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee.' *This* is plain enough," he continued. "Now, I have known many men in trouble, and they have prayed time after time without getting any answer."

"I think," said I, "you go too far in making that sweeping assertion. You are not in a position to say what answer they have received; I allow that they may not have received the answer which they expected, but I have more faith in the *answer* than in the *prayer*, because I have more faith in *God* than in *man*. There is one answer which God makes to all prayer that is offered in a right spirit: *He creates a state of mind which enables the suppliant to accept the wants of daily life hopefully and even thankfully.* I think I am right in claiming this as *the highest use of prayer.* It gives man to realize his true relation to God, it humbles his ambition, it encourages his dependence, it enables him to take a comprehensive and unselfish view of life. You say men have not been answered in the day of trouble; I contend that, if the conditions of true prayer have been forthcoming, they *have* been answered, our only difference being as to a definition of the term 'answer,' which we can mutually accept. You measure Divine answers by human replies; you bind God to a *Yes* or *No;* you confine Him within the limits of the request, not thinking that by so much as He is *God*, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that the suppliant can ask or think."

"Well," said my practical interlocutor, "an answer *is* an answer after all. If a Christian asks God for daily bread, I don't call it an answer unless he gets the very thing he has asked for. I think you will admit that to be common sense."

"I really cannot admit it to be common sense," said I, "until I know more about the case than you have told me, or perhaps *can* tell me. A man came to me to beg; I did not give him money, but I told him where to get work; he got it, and now he honourably supports himself by it. Did I, or did I not, answer the man's prayer? I mention this to show that it is possible, whilst apparently rejecting a man's request, to do more for him than he had ventured to expect. I acknowledge frankly that to the receivers and observers it would appear to confirm the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer, if all petitions were answered literally and instantly; but we forget all that is involved in such an arrangement. God is excluded from the argument by being practically divested of will, knowledge, grace, and in fact all the qualities and attributes which are essential to Godhead, and the theory is a humiliating illustration of the one-sidedness of all reasoning that ignores the Supernatural and Invisible. I am not sure that the prayers of the best men do not quite as much reveal their ignorance as their wisdom. We do not know the *whole* of any case; we see but fragments of our own circumstances; we do not know what is best for ourselves. The trouble we would escape may be a minister of good to us; bodily affliction may work out the refinement of the spirit; the disappointment which grieves us to-day may occasion us high enjoyment to-morrow. Yesterday a son importuned his father to allow him to travel by a certain train, but the father resolutely said, *No*. The son was angry, sullen, resentful; he chafed under his father's supremacy, and longed to be his own master. This morning news was received that a terrible accident befell the train, by which every passenger was killed or injured, and to-day the disappointed son thanks and blesses the father for a decision which saved his life. It is thus that our Heavenly Father governs us. He disappoints us that He may bless us; He puts aside our little prayer that He may enrich us with unexpected answers; He drives away the momentary cloud by light which brings morning into the heart."

"Well," said my pertinacious interlocutor, "there seems to me to be a good deal of mystery about the whole thing; I can make nothing of it."

So much for our interview. I do not attempt to clear the subject of prayer of all mystery, nor, indeed, can all mystery be cleared from any religious subject. Two or three most important things are perfectly

certain to my own mind, and upon them I rest in entire confidence. First of all, God is infinitely wise, gracious, and powerful; secondly, man is shortsighted, changeable, and weak; thirdly, events often take unexpected turns, and yield meanings quite unlooked for. When I go to God in prayer it is to submit, not to dictate; to lay before Him my circumstances, to express my desires, and to put myself wholly into His hands, concluding every prayer with 'not my will, but Thine, be done.' Having confidence in God, I know that His answer, though opposed to my desires, must be best. I cannot prove it by mere argument; I must *wait*. What are my days but a span? what is my life to God's eternity? In the *end* I shall see that God's mercy has been quite as much shown in denying some prayers as in answering others, and that where I murmured at His delay I should have rejoiced in His forbearance. I would stand before God as a loving child, frankly telling Him all that is in my heart, and then saying, "Father! I can see but a little way into things; I am always making mistakes of one kind or another; do as Thou pleasest, for Thou dost all things well."

Prayer.

Almighty God, we bless Thee for the privilege of communion with Thyself through Jesus Christ our Lord. We delight to know that we may pour out our hearts before Thee in thanksgiving, supplication, and adoring trust, being assured that Thou wilt not deny the requests which are offered in faith, and which are in harmony with Thy purposes of infinite wisdom and love. We rejoice to have wrought in us the conviction that Thou art the hearer and answerer of prayer. Thou hast encouraged us boldly to approach Thy Throne and fully to declare all that is in our hearts; we come now so to do, and pray that we may enter into the realization of those heavenly joys which Thou dost give to all who diligently wait upon Thee. Thou knowest the doubts which often mingle with our aspirations; there is not a temptation which assails the soul with which Thou art not acquainted. We rejoice that Jesus Christ, our High Priest, is not only acquainted with our infirmities, but that He bears them for us, and that our weakness becomes strength through the might of His intercession. We now thank Thee for the innumerable instances in which Thou hast been pleased to answer our prayers. Thou hast given us light when we have sat in darkness; Thou hast

spoken the word of comfort when our souls have been filled with sadness; Thou hast enlarged our way and established our paths when our enemies have looked on with hope that we might stumble and fall. We rejoice to believe that where Thou hast denied, Thou hast been more merciful in the denial than Thou wouldst have been in compliance with our desires; truly, we know not how to pray except Thou dost inspire our hearts, and we rejoice to know that where Thou dost inspire the prayer, Thou wilt assuredly do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think in response to our cry. Help us most importunately to desire the best gifts: in our prayers may we be delivered from all the temptations which come of our selfishness: may we surrender our will to Thine, and how much soever our heart may be disappointed by Thine answers or Thy silence, may we rest in the assured conviction that whether Thou dost speak to us or hold Thy peace, our welfare is ever dear to Thee. Save us from all that would interfere with loving fellowship with Thyself. So far do Thou give us dominion over time and sense as to enable us to enter into intelligent and profitable communion with Thy Spirit, and thus may we be trained increasingly to look at things unseen and eternal, and to find our satisfaction in blessings that are not earthly but heavenly. Are there any in Thy presence who have never prayed? In this holy hour may they be enabled to lift up their hearts in fervent desire; teach the lips of the dumb to speak; and may those who have hitherto been silent be found making a joyful noise unto the Rock of their salvation. Give thine own people to feel the infinite preciousness of prayer; enable them to pray without ceasing; in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving may they make known their requests unto God, and may Thy unspeakable peace be the answer to their entreaties. May prayer become to us a joy; may it often express itself in praise; and may our desires deepen into vital union with Thyself, so that our own will may be lost in Thy blessed purposes.

We pray Thee now to pardon our sin; how great it is Thou only knowest, but it is our delight to know that the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanseth for all sin, and that there is not a stain upon our soul which cannot be removed by His all-cleansing sacrifice. Having forgiven us, do Thou also sanctify us, so that we may live and move, and have our highest being in God. All this we ask in the name of our blessed and only Saviour, to whom be praise, perfect and immortal. Amen.

The City Temple.

A Parable on Prayer.

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 24TH, 1870.

THE principle of prayer seems to run through all social life. The little child prays in its own graphic way before it can put its wishes into words. Poor men put their requests before men that are rich. The scholar prays the help of the teacher. The sufferer prays the physician to aid him. The traveller who has missed his way prays the passer-by to put him in the right road. The citizen prays the Senate, and the Senate prays the Sovereign. From these circumstances, it is clear that what may be called *the principle of prayer* operates throughout the whole plan of social intercourse—men need help of one another; the rich man needs the poor, as well as the poor the rich. In fact, society is a system of dependencies, and social prayer is a condition of progress. Now, let it be supposed—I ask for nothing further than an assumption—that man should by any means become conscious of wants that cannot be satisfied by any of the sources of mutual help; let him come to a point at which friendship is utterly powerless—a point where the teacher's wisdom is exhausted, and the physician's skill is unavailing, and where his most constant and loving adherents are compelled to own that they cannot do anything more for him;—let it be further assumed that the man who is thus driven to extremity has faith in God, in the Almighty, All-wise, Ever-loving Father, and if these two conditions be assumed, they furnish a conclusive reason for the exercise of prayer. In fact, the man who is conscious of wants which transcend all ordinary sources of satisfaction, and who has faith in God, *must* pray: with him there is no question of hesitation or probability, it is simply a gracious *necessity*. Even in the absence of a *command* to pray, the heart would have been a law unto itself; the soul would have addressed the God in whom it confided. I put the doctrine of prayer on no merely arbitrary basis; prayer is natural, is instinctive, is, in short, *necessary as an expression of spiritual life.*

My friend, to whom I put this view of the case, said:

"With me it is not so much a question whether prayer is *natural*, as

whether it is *effectual.* Are the prayers of men answered, or are they not?"

"Not an improper question," said I, "and not difficult to answer, because there ought to be evidence enough in the religious history of mankind to settle the inquiry instantly and satisfactorily. Now, as a mere matter of fact, there is a religious book, whatever may be its value, which distinctly says, in nearly every variety of expression, that prayers *have been* most fully answered. You are bound as a candid inquirer to observe that this subject is not left as a mere matter of inference—it is not darkly hinted at—it is repeated and insisted upon throughout the whole Bible; you find it in Moses, in the Psalms, in the Prophets, and in all the Christian writings; prayers are recorded, answers to prayers are specified, encouragements to pray are urged in the most fervent terms, and reproaches on account of the omission of prayer are not spared: now, the responsibility of dealing with this evidence is forced upon me; I have to say whether it is *true* or *false;* it is too copious and emphatic to be got rid of in an easy manner. If I am determined *not* to believe in prayer, of course I can treat Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, and a great multitude of other witnesses either as dupes or knaves; but as I am a candid inquirer, earnestly desirous to *know* the truth and to *obey* it, I must deal with their evidence in a judicial manner. Now, let me ask you, as if all those witnesses were actually standing before you and awaiting your answer, *how do you propose to treat their evidence?*"

"Well, I confess," said he, "I should like to have some evidence nearer my own time to deal with; I feel a difficulty in grappling with testimony so ancient and so scattered."

I smiled at the novelty of the request, and said, "Don't imagine that time can impair facts: *your own* evidence will one day be very old, and perhaps it will be called in question because it is not five centuries nearer the day of some prejudiced controversialist. If a statement is true, it is not true in its accidental relation to *time*, but essentially and unchangeably true; if, therefore, I come to recent evidence, you must not imagine that I forego the consistent and overpowering testimony of ancient saints. Now," I continued, gravely and fervently, "we shall come very near your own day, and in doing so I put *myself* before you as a witness that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer; mark me, I assume the *responsibility* of saying that *my own* prayers have been heard and answered."

"*All* of them?" my interlocutor inquired.

"That is not the point," said I; "you cannot judge such questions as we are discussing by numbers; our decision does not turn upon the word *all* or *some;* I take a very clear position in the matter, namely, that if *one* prayer has been answered, your theory is upset. Understand me; if one prayer, at any time and under any circumstances, has been answered, the argument is conclusively settled in favour of the doctrine of prayer. Clearly so, because all the conditions required by the argument are fully satisfied, viz., man in need, man addressing God, man receiving God's replies; so you assume a heavy responsibility in rejecting the doctrine of prayer, nothing short of the responsibility of denying

that any prayer has ever been answered, under any circumstances whatsoever, since the world began."

My friend was astounded at having all this responsibility charged upon him; yet, on reflection, he owned that he saw no logical escape from the extremity of his position. I urged his further attention to this view of the case.

"Remember," said I, "you are not at liberty to conclude the argument in your favour, even if you can prove that ninety-nine prayers out of every hundred are *not answered;* you are bound to account for the single exception, and I further think that you are shut up to some such course of reasoning as this: Here is *one* answer to prayer, this one answer makes it clear that God *does* under certain circumstances reply to human requests; it is probable, therefore, that there has been something amiss in the circumstances of those who did not receive answers to their prayers. You must either do that, or charge God himself with caprice and partiality, in which case He would no longer be God. Now," said I, "will you allow me to suggest that you do not appear to know what prayer *is*, but you may correct me, if you can, by defining it?"

"Why," said he, "prayer is simply telling God what you need, and asking Him for it."

"Nothing more?" said I.

"Nothing more that I know of," he replied.

"If a stranger asked you for a sovereign, would you give it to him?"

"Probably not."

"But why not?" I inquired; "you must have some reason."

"Because I should not know the man, nor should I know what he wanted with the money."

"Very well," said I, "that is a proper reason; but change the case: if your child, two years old, wanted a sovereign, would you give it him?"

"Certainly not, because he would not know what to do with it."

"Then," said I, "go further; if your son, who is twenty years of age, wanted a sovereign, would you give it him?"

"I might or I might not," said my friend; "I should hear his reasons for asking for the sovereign, and, if I approved them, very likely he should have the money."

"At all events," said I, "you would claim the right of decision?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And under any circumstances," I continued, "you would make a difference between a stranger and your own son?"

"Naturally so."

"Then," said I, "why do you object to God acting precisely on the same principle?"

"Because," said my friend, triumphantly, "there cannot be any strangers in the sight of God."

"Think," said I, "think for one moment, before you content yourself with that answer. You have already said that if all men were *sons*, their reasons should be heard, and only, if those reasons were good, should the requests be granted; but," said I, "do you really think there cannot be any *strangers* in God's sight?"

"Why, how is it possible?" my friend inquired; "He made all men, and of course He knows all men."

"Only in a very limited sense," said I, "are you right; but for all the purposes of this discussion, you are wrong. Are you not aware that a son may have made himself a stranger to his own father? Cannot the deepest and tenderest relations be disorganized, and even destroyed? It may be that fathers may be driven to disown their children, and to hide themselves from their faces. Now, the same book that teaches the doctrine of prayer teaches also a doctrine of human nature, which plainly shows that men have fallen from sonship, they are strangers in heart, they have corrupted themselves, and gone astray; God says, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;' and this fact must have its bearings on the doctrine of prayer."

We paused for a moment. We were moving rapidly into some of the most difficult questions in religious thinking, and it was important that we should keep the immediate subject closely in hand, lest it should become intermingled with matter which might impair its unity.

"Come now," said I, "let us go back to your definition of prayer: you say that prayer is telling God what you want, and asking him to give it;—now, in order to bring the subject more fully out, I *deny* that this is a proper definition of prayer."

"Then," said my candid friend, "I don't know what prayer is. What fault have you to find with my definition of it?"

"Your definition," said I, "is incomplete: first of all, it does not go far enough; and, secondly, it does not include or even recognise the conditions on which alone men can either truly pray or be successfully heard."

I gave my friend an opportunity to assume the defensive, if he pleased; instead, however, of stubbornly insisting on his own definition, he took the only course that was open to a candid and earnest inquirer.

"Tell me," said he "*your* definition of prayer, and I shall see whether I can accept it."

Thus invited, I replied: "Let us, in the first place, clear the ground, by pointing out what prayer is *not*. Prayer is not the last resort of selfish fear; prayer is not a mere convenience, of which men may avail themselves under painful pressure; prayer is not an experiment by which the creature may play upon the good nature of the Creator; prayer is not an occasional impulse, or an intermittent exaltation of the mind. Thus much for the negative side. What, then, is prayer affirmatively? I should describe it *a habit of the soul*, or the right mood of the mind towards God. Man cannot always be using the language of prayer, or assuming the attitude of formal devotion: prayer is an expression of trust, of reverence, of love; prayer includes more than supplication, it includes *communion;* prayer is not an assertion of our own will, it is an effort to know God's will, and a disposition to do it; true it may mean *asking*, but always *asking* with a confession of ignorance and weakness on the part of the petitioner."

"Then," said my friend, "how do you account for so many prayers being unanswered?"

"First of all," said I, "let us be careful how we use the word 'unanswered' in reference to any prayer. We do not know always what the true answer is. God has many ways of attending to the desires of those who love Him. In the next place, it is clear that in the case of an unanswered prayer the difficulty must be either in the intent of the prayer or in the disposition of God. This narrows the ground. Now, with this alternative before me, I do not hesitate to say that I would rather suppose ignorance or other deficiency on the part of man, than accept the doctrine that God is indifferent to the circumstances of such as truly commit their way to Him."

Having given this answer, I put my friend once more into a leading position.

"Tell me," said I, "what you would propose as a *substitute* for prayer?"

"I should just let things take their natural course," said my friend.

"But what *is* the natural course of things?" said I.

"Why, letting events pass without asking God to interpose in any way."

"Indeed!" said I, without attempting to soften my tone of indignant irony. "Would you like your child to let events pass without asking your assistance or advice?"

"Of course not; but then he *is* a child; he does not know the ways of the world, and he needs all the help that his father can give him."

"On that very ground," said I, "we need the assistance of God. What is the oldest and greatest of us but a little child in God's sight? Are we not every day making mistakes, and falling into snares? Are we not exposed to evil suggestions, and deceived by our own counsel? *You* say, 'Leave things to their natural course, let things alone, never say a word to God about them.' You turn away from heaven the look of expectation, and silence the voice of praise. *Jesus Christ* says to men, You have a Father in heaven, He cares for you, He numbers the very hairs of your head; pray to your Father in secret, and He will reward you openly."

"A magnificent theory," said my friend; "I wish I could accept it as *true*."

"For my part," said I, "it has been accepted as true, and every day brings its own peculiar joy in the doctrine. Now, hear me for a little while. Jesus Christ said, 'Ask and ye shall receive;' the Apostle James says, 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss,' plainly showing that something more than mere *asking* was required. Look at the case of a child asking a favour of a parent. There are three circumstances under which a child may be said to ask amiss—First, if he asked in a spirit which asserted an independent *right;* second, if he asked merely for the sake of increasing his means of self-indulgence; third, if he asked simply for the purpose of making an experiment on his father's good nature. Under any of these circumstances, we could understand the reason of rejection; how much more so when they find a place in the petitions which are addressed to heaven? It appears to me that two things are often overlooked in considering the obligation and advantages of prayer:—

"1. *That in the sight of God, all men have lost their moral standing.* When a man prays, his attitude should indicate guilt and shame; he

should put his hand upon his mouth and put his mouth in the dust; yet men talk as if, morally, they were God's equals, and complain if their depraved and feeble words do not engage all the powers of Heaven on their behalf.

"2. *That having lost their moral standing, men have also lost their intellectual vigour.* We really don't know every side of our own circumstances. Our best-considered actions are often but so many blunders. Supposed blessings may be concealed temptations—supposed calamities may be blessings in disguise. An answer which may please us to-day, may to-morrow become an embarrassment and a mortification. If all our prayers were answered, we should often have to pray that our prayers might be reversed, and that our next prayer might be wiser than our last.

"Now, with these two things in view, it is clear to my own mind that God must not be judged by what we are pleased to call answers to our prayers. We are bound to protect the name of God from profanity, and this obligation binds us to the alternative, that the prayers which are ineffectual are best answered by not being answered at all."

"I confess," said my friend, "that in taking the view of God which you have now given, you have put yourself into a very strong position; in fact, I don't see how to dislodge you."

"Everything," said I, "in an argument of this kind depends upon the view which is taken of the Divine government, and you are bound, I submit, to start the inquiry from the Divine rather than from the human side: What is God? What is His position in the universe? What is the moral purpose of His government? Having just notions of these subjects, we may descend to other inquiries: What is man? What is the term of his being? What is his moral condition? What is the value of his judgment? What are the peculiarities of his circumstances? Then will come a third series of questions: Is man commanded to pray? Is he encouraged to do so? Is it in harmony with his best instincts to seek other and higher help than his own? The Christian teacher has a clear answer to all these inquiries, and therefore he is at rest on the subject of prayer. You are by no means to understand that the subject is devoid of mystery, but you *are* to understand that however much mystery there may be connected with the doctrine of prayer, there is nothing but mystery *without* it. I put this view of the case fearlessly to your own reason. Given, the existence of God, Almighty, all-wise, all-gracious; given also, creatures who are capable of receiving a revelation from Him; creatures who can think, legislate, and set up a society on a moral basis; creatures who, by daily mistakes, prove themselves to be ignorant, and by daily failings prove themselves to be weak;—given these conditions, and the naturalness and even necessity of prayer can admit of no debate. There will always be difficulties about the method and scope of Divine answers, because men cannot see beyond a very limited range, and they are generally impatient with everything that seems to thwart their own ideas of what is best for them. It is not easy to get quite down to the point of self-crucifixion—not easy, when some favoured desire is urging itself upon the heart to risk an appeal to God which may elicit a command to destroy the suggestion which promises to secure great enjoyment.

Yet this point must be reached before the advantages of prayer can be fully realized; but when it is reached, prayer becomes the sweetest and the most practical exercise of the highest faculties of the spiritual nature."

To the pressure of argument may I attempt to add the stimulus of exhortation? It is with prayer as it is occasionally with intellectual work. Often, writers shrink from their uninviting tasks, consciously unable to perform them; yet, as they may be more or less under the strain of necessity, they overcome their reluctance to attempt a beginning, and, after severe self-discipline, the subject yields itself into their hands, rewarding them with a success heightened by the remembrance of the difficulty. So with our most sacred religious exercises. We do not always enjoy an equal sense of God's nearness and preciousness; we do not always feel equally inclined to seek fellowship with God; yet, if we persist in urging our way to the throne of grace, we shall find that by overcoming difficulties we have increased our capacity to receive Divine blessing, and prepared ourselves for other attempts to exclude us from the Divine presence. If we pray in this spirit of hallowed determination, we shall pray *importunately*. If God be silent, we shall not restrain prayer—if He answer not immediately, we shall yet continue until the cloud gives promise of rain. Importunity, as between a child and a parent, is often properly regarded as a sign of disobedience, and we are not to forget that even as between man and God the same inference is just. Everything depends upon the subject which engages our importunity. When we are importunate in insisting on having our own way in the affairs of this life, we put ourselves in a false position before God—our importunity may be our sin; but when we seek spiritual refinement and sanctification, when we desire to know God's will that we may do it, we may tarry with holy determination before the throne, in the exercise of self-renewing patience, until we receive abundantly the riches of Divine grace. Do you complain that you cannot pray? I encourage you to try. Say from the heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and you have prayed; nay more, lift up your heart in unuttered desire, and the offering will be accepted as prayer; tell God you would pray if you could, and He will surely teach the dumb to praise Him. Do you wish to know the way of access to the Father? It is through His Son Jesus Christ. There is no other way. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it." Jesus Christ sends us to the Father, and bids us use His name. We are sinners, yet we are heard through the Saviour—we are rebels, yet there is a living Mediator—we are stained with manifold and aggravated sin, yet there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Whilst we are praying for ourselves, Jesus Christ is praying for us: He is the intercessor; He represents us before God. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." "In everything by prayer and supplication make known your requests to God," and in the blessed peace which will suffuse your heart and give it a sense of dominion over all earthly circumstances, you will have the best assurance that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

Postscript.

Professor Tyndall is a preacher of science ; is he therefore a scientific preacher ? In concluding a lecture upon Matter and Force, delivered in connection with a meeting of the British Association, the learned Professor fell into a tone of exhortation, and addressed his audience in the following terms :—

"The phenomena of matter and force lie within our intellectual range ; and so far as they reach, we will at all hazards push our inquiries. But behind, and above, and around, all the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved. Fathom this mystery as you will. With that I have nothing to do ; but be careful that your conception of the Builder of this universe is not an unworthy conception. Invest that conception with your grandest and highest and holiest thought, but be careful of pretending to know more about it than is given to man to know. Be careful, above all things, of professing to see in the phenomena of the material world the evidence of the Divine pleasure or displeasure. Doubt those equally who pretend to see in cholera, cattle plague, and bad harvests evidences of Divine anger."

We confess that there are some points in this exhortation which considerably perplex us, and to which, with the utmost respect for science and its competent teachers, we venture to take decided exception. We are sincerely thankful to any man who will help to secure for religious thought the exactest nicety of expression, because inaccuracy, whether arising from defective intelligence or ill-regulated sentiment, is always a weakness. We have no doubt that men of correct discipline of mind have been offended by many assertions which have borne the appearance of fanaticism, and that the recoil of taste has occasioned us little spiritual loss. At the same time it is possible to push this concession too far, and so to inflict positive injury upon religious truth. If we wanted an illustration of the retributive bearing of this opinion, we might find it in Professor Tyndall's own words, for if, as we shall try to prove, Professor Tyndall has founded his exhortation upon an untenable basis, it would not be an unfair application of his own principle to conclude that the man who can speak so loosely about religion cannot be a very reliable authority in science.

We are told that "the phenomena of matter and force lie within our intellectual range." What then ? Does it follow that our intellectual range embraces no other phenomena ? There is a science of mind as well as a science of matter, but we are not dogmatic enough to determine whether they sustain any inter-relation. It is clear, however, from every side of the argument that the mind is a greater mystery than matter,

and if the mind, without which scientific investigation is impossible, should be defective, there is great danger that the so-called results of science may be incomplete and fallacious. Given a judgment that is perfectly balanced, whose fallibility arises not from quality but from limitation, and given a world whose original relations have not been violently disturbed, and we may reasonably look for a set of results accurate as far as they go; on the other hand, given a mind which has been enfeebled by a great apostasy, a mind at least limited, often prejudiced, and always exposed to secondary influences, and given a world which bears traces of the most terrific moral eruption, amounting in some places practically to transformation, and we shall very likely have a set of one-sided and even inconsistent results. Admitting, then, that the phenomena of matter and force do lie within our intellectual range, we have to inquire the consequence of that "intellectual range" being itself prejudiced or distorted. In Professor Tyndall's method of putting the argument everything is assumed in favour of the mind, but it ought not to be forgotten that the mind itself has been convicted of many mistakes and many violations of truth, and therefore has a work of self-vindication to do before it can be admitted as an unquestionable witness. Of what advantage is it to the blind man that physical objects be within the range of vision? And if all men are conscious that their intellectual ability is often perverted and always limited, this circumstance ought at least to qualify their assertions. The most philosophical of the philosophers will be the first to admit that his intellectual range is, to say the least of it, incomplete, and that by so much his conclusions may possibly be defective. We are not attempting to force any unnecessary humiliation on the philosopher in asking him to admit this much; we merely put into words what he would instantly accept as a fact. This admission concedes the point at which the argument of supernaturalism takes its inception; granting the infallibility of the intellect, the possible unsoundness of its conclusions is also granted, and when the possible unsoundness of its conclusions is granted it is not unnatural that the intellect should ask, Is there any standard of infallibility?

Professor Tyndall says, that "behind, and above, and around, all the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved." Then, unless the universe be a series of unrelated fragments, if the real mystery be unsolved, it follows that what we do suppose ourselves to know might, by further knowledge of the universe, be modified; its proportion might be changed; what now appears to be great and final might be proved to be trivial and progressive. So long as "the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved," science can have but a very limited sphere, and even that limited sphere may be reduced to insignificance, by fuller disclosures of God's power and purpose. A map of a city may be so enlarged as to exceed the map of a continent, but on the whole globe that city may be indicated only by its name; in itself, and in relation to surrounding towns, that city may be great, yet in relation to the whole world it may sustain very modest proportions. So the purported facts which science claims may be affected intrinsically and relationally by further discoveries even in the region which is supposed to come within "the intellectual

range." We merely say that it *may* be so, and we think that the possibility accords well with what is known in life generally; for is it not true that one experience corrects and modifies another, and that what is true to the child may be untrue to the man? Professor Tyndall says that with this mystery he has nothing to do. We doubt this. He himself would grant that this mystery should at least teach veneration, attemper the natural positiveness of one-sided education, and keep men in constant readiness to receive further light. What if "the real mystery of the universe" be the Living God? And what if the Living God has made a revelation of Himself? It is of much consequence to remember that Professor Tyndall acknowledges that there is something which transcends reason, something, at least, which reason has not yet discovered, and to remember also that reason, represented by a learned professor of science, has confessed in a scientific congress that "the real mystery of the universe remains unsolved." According to this confession, which we would not unduly strain, science has not touched the *real* mystery; it has been studying a few phenomena, and so confining itself to an outside work. This is undoubtedly right, and, if there is any virtue in the admission, it will follow that those who have studied only the phenomena of the natural world should not dogmatise even on the negative side of supernaturalism. According to the cant of the day, if a man should speak firmly on the positive side of religion, he is pronounced a dogmatist; but, if he pronounce firmly on the negative side, he is thought to be a liberal and unsectarian thinker. Is there not a dogmatism of negation? Is there not a cant of latitudinarianism? It may appear to be very modest to declare that we have nothing to do with "the real mystery of the universe;" but it may be modesty at the expense of truth.

Professor Tyndall says: "Be careful that your conception of the Builder of this universe is not an unworthy conception. Invest that conception with your grandest, and highest, and holiest thought; but be careful of pretending to know more about it than is given to man to know." Probably the professor and ourselves would differ in defining a "worthy conception" of "the Builder of this universe." From a Christian point of view we should feel bound to conceive of God as doing many things which natural reason might doubt. For example, natural reason might be staggered on finding that Jesus Christ's conception of God was that of a Father who gave men their daily bread, who noticed the falling sparrow, who watered the grass of the field, who numbered the hairs of the head, and did many other things which would not admit of the word "grand" as commonly understood. We infer that Professor Tyndall's "conception of the Builder of this universe" is a conception of infinite magnificence, of omnipotent force, of boundless wisdom; and so far the conception is right. It may, however, be all this, and yet be intensely heathenish—a modernised mythology or a scientific paganism. We do not say that it is this; but looked at in the light of history, there is certainly a possibility that it may be this and this only. The appeal to our "conception," too, may be held to be of doubtful validity. If every man has to idealise a god for himself, who could describe the pantheon of the world? Professor Tyndall's challenge has been accepted in

anticipation, and history will tell us what "the grandest, highest, holiest thought" of "the Builder of this universe" has amounted to. On Olympus we find a court of immortals whose acknowledged fraud indicates a deep depravity; in Japan we have a temple of ten thousand idols; in India we have a sublime Brahm, too ineffably calm to be of any service to the world; in Athens we have more gods than men; in Polynesia we have a mythology at once obscene and absurd. So much for men's "conceptions" of God,—a magnificent but mournful chaos, sweltering and surging without any hope of being ruled into order by human genius. The inquiry which we cannot but think of some consequence is, Is it probable that a Being capable of exciting the "grandest and highest and holiest thought" (Professor Tyndall's own words) has made a revelation of Himself? If He is capable of exciting such thought, is He incapable of satisfying it? Professor Tyndall warns his hearers to "be careful of pretending to know more about it than is given to man to know." There is a counter-warning which may be urged upon Professor Tyndall; and that is, to be careful of neglecting to know all that may be known. If man's knowledge of God is limited to his "conceptions" (a statement which amounts to a contradiction in terms, for to *conceive* is not to know), the exhortation may be pertinent; but if the knowledge is founded upon revelation, of course the revelation must determine its quality and limit. The question of primary importance would seem to relate exclusively to the fact of a revelation. Is there any revelation of God? If so, where is it to be found? It may be affirmed that God has not given any revelation of His will, or addressed the moral nature of man; but this affirmation gives a direct contradiction to the Bible—what that contradiction involves cannot now be discussed in detail. On the other hand, if it be allowed that the Bible contains a revelation of God's person and will, the inquiry must be confined within the limits of its statements.

It strikes us that Professor Tyndall's exhortation is too vague to be scientific, and too materialistic to be religious. "Be careful, above all things," says he, "of professing to see in the phenomena of the material world the evidence of the Divine pleasure or displeasure. Doubt those equally who pretend to see in cholera, cattle-plague, and bad harvests evidences of Divine anger"—advice which appears to us to be one-sided and ill-reasoned. It is, undoubtedly, of very high importance to recognise the operation of what may be termed secondary influences, when considering the causes of cholera, cattle-plague, and bad harvests. Want of such recognition has unquestionably led to many false conclusions, and exposed religious thought to a good deal of severe aspersion. If Professor Tyndall says that much of cattle-plague or of cholera may be attributed to neglect of the laws of nature, no sensible man will contradict him; but when that admission has been made, the question of supernatural interposition remains untouched. It will not be denied that cattle-plague, cholera, and bad harvests have *some* cause. What is it? It is granted that in many cases man may have himself to blame; the laws of nature are so precise, and so sensitive in their operation, that carelessness is followed by derangement and loss; but there are cases in which the utmost carefulness is unrewarded. When man has

illed the ground and sowed the seed, he can neither command the rain nor regulate the temperature of the seasons. There is a point at which man must stand still—exhausted, uninformed, impotent—a point which Professor Tyndall may call "the real mystery of the universe." At that point some men begin to fret, others begin to pray. Those who begin to pray have no complaint against science; on the contrary, they watch its progress with enlightened and devout interest, and thank God for every discovery; nothing has yet been discovered which is incompatible with the Biblical revelation of the Divine attributes, but very much which, though indirectly, yet most vividly symbolizes the lustre and the love of God. We consider it positively immoral to attempt to divorce science from religion; each has its own sphere, yet both may be consistent; the facts of science may illustrate the doctrines of religion; the doctrines of religion may give a more splendid significance to the facts of science. We consider, therefore, that Professor Tyndall has gone out of his way to asperse what may after all be true in fact, though faulty in expression, and that in doing so he has shown the insufficiency of the lesser light to rule the day of the soul.

With regard even to the secondary influences which are supposed to produce cattle-plague, cholera, and bad harvests, the Christian argument appears to be sound. It is granted that neglect of the laws of nature in respect to cleanliness and ventilation may cause a plague; but such neglect is something more than a mere physical crime; inasmuch as it endangers life it is an immorality, and as an immorality it is punished by physical consequences. If it be urged that neglect of the laws of nature may in some cases be attributed to ignorance, there are those who would contend that ignorance itself is the result of a false moral standing, and we cannot but think that their answer is historically and spiritually correct. In a word, the Christian argument upon this part of the question proceeds upon the principle that the greater includes the less, that physical error is primarily due to moral derangement, and that the evil consequences which attend physical error are hints of the heavier judgments which are provoked by strictly moral trespass.

The City Temple.

Report of a Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 3rd, 1870.

ON GOD'S TERRIBLENESS AND GENTLENESS.

"I will destroy and devour at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."—Isaiah xlii. 14—16.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. Our God is a consuming fire—God is love. The combination of great power and great restraint, and, indeed, the combination of opposite qualities and uses generally, is well known in the ordinary arrangements of civilized life and the daily operation of the laws of nature. The measure of greatness is the measure of terribleness. What is constructiveness but the beneficent side of destructiveness? The fire that warms your chamber when properly regulated, will, if abused, reduce your proudest palaces to ashes. The river, which softens and refreshes the landscape, if allowed to escape its banks, may devastate the most fruitful fields. The engine, which is swiftly bearing the laughing child to his longed-for home, will, if mismanaged, occasion the most terrible havoc. The lightning, which may be caught and utilised by genius and skill, can burn the forest, and strike armies blind. We are familiar with such illustrations of united opposites, and our knowledge of them inspires our enterprise, and attempers with prudence the noble audacity of practical science. In the text we are confronted with the highest expression of the same truth—the mighty God is the Everlasting Father; the terrible One is gentler than the gentlest friend; He who rides in the chariot of

the thunder stoops to lead the blind by a way that they know not, and to gather the failing lambs in His bosom.

Without challenging you to accompany me in a speculative study of the Divine nature, I shall address myself to the solemn practical truth of the text, viz., that God can do the most terrible things and the most gentle; that power belongeth unto God, and also mercy; that He is either glorious as heaven or fearful as hell; and, in dwelling upon that truth, I pray that, seeing both the severity and the goodness of God, we may rejoice in His presence with trembling, and yield ourselves to the sweet dominion of His love.

In pointing out the terribleness of God it is not intended to appeal to fear, but to support and encourage the most loving confidence in His government. I do not say, Be good, or God will crush you; that is not virtue; that is not liberty—it is vice put on its good behaviour—it is iniquity with a sword suspended over its head; it is not even negative goodness; it is mischief put *hors de combat*. The great truth which I wish to preach from this aspect of the case is, that all the terribleness of God is the good man's security. When the good man sees God wasting the mountains and the hills, and drying up the rivers, he does not say, "I must worship Him, or He will destroy me;" he says, "*The beneficent side of that power is all mine;* because of that power I am safe; the very lightning is my guardian, and in the whirlwind I hear a pledge of benediction." The good man is delivered from the fear of power; power has become to him an assurance of rest; he says, "My Father has infinite resources of judgment, and every one of them is to my trusting heart a signal of unsearchable riches of mercy."

1. *Look at the doctrine of the text in relation to bad men who pride themselves upon their success and their strength.* Daily life has always been a problem to devout wisdom. Virtue has often been crushed out of the front rank. Vice has forced its way to pre-eminence. The praying man has often had to kneel upon the cold stones; the profane man has often walked upon velvet. These are the commonplaces of daily study upon the affairs of men. The doctrine of the text is that there is a power beyond man's, and that nothing is held safely which is not held by consent of that power. Think of wealth as a mountain, or of social position as a hill: God says, "I will make waste mountains and hills;" our greatness is nothing to Him; our mountain smokes when He touches it, and our rock melts at His presence. All our gain, our honour, our standing should be looked at in the light of this solemn doctrine. We are not at liberty to exclude the destructive power of God from our practical theology. We have not to make a God, to fancy a God, or to propose a modification of a suggested God—God is before

us, in His might, His glory, His love, and we have to acquaint ourselves with Him. God is not to be described in parts; He is to be comprehended in the unity of His character. A child describing the lightning might say, "It was beautiful, so bright, and swifter than any flying bird, and so quiet that I could not hear it as it passed through the air;" this would be true. A tree might say, "It was awful, it tore off branches that had been growing for a hundred years, it rent me in twain down to the very root, and no summer can ever recover me—I am left here to die;" this also would be true. So with Almighty God: He is terrible in power, making nothing of all that man counts strong, yet He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. What I specially wish to insist upon is, that men are bound to be as common-sense in their theology as they are in the ordinary works of life, and that in building character they are to be at least as forethoughtful and sagacious as in building their houses of stone. How do you conduct your arrangements in building a house? Suppose that it were possible for a man never to have seen any season but summer, and suppose such a man called upon to advise in the erection of a building: you can imagine his procedure; everything is to be light, because he never heard a high wind; water-pipes may be exposed, for he never felt the severity of frost; the most flimsy roof will be sufficient, for he knows nothing of the great rains of winter and spring. Tell such a man that the winds will become stormy, that the rivers will be chilled into ice, that his windows will be blinded with snow, and that floods will beat upon his roof, and if he is a wise man he will say, "I must not build for one season, but for all seasons; I must not build for fine days, but for days that will be tempestuous; I must, as far as possible, prepare for the most inclement and trying weather." That is simple common sense. Now, why be less sensible in building a character than in building a house? We build our bricks for severity as well as for sunshine, why build our characters with less care? If in summer we think about the frost, why not in prosperity have some thought for adversity? If in July we prepare for December, why not in the flattering hour of exultation think of the judgment that is at once infallible and irresistible? As he would be infinitely foolish who should build his house without thinking of the natural forces that will try its strength, so is he cursed with insanity who builds his character without thinking of the fire with which God will try every man's work of what sort it is.

Is not the same truth illustrated by every ship upon the great waters? The child who has only sailed his paper boat on the edge of a placid lake, might wonder what was wanted with enormous beams and bars of iron, innumerable bolts and screws, and clasps and bars of metal, in making a ship: ask the sailor, and he will answer; he says we must be prepared

for something more than calm days, we must look a-head, the breakers will try us, the winds will put us to the test, we may come upon an unknown rock, we must be prepared for the worst as well as for the best. We call this prudence. We condemn its omission. We applaud its observance. What of men who attempt the stormy and treacherous waters of life without having had any regard to the probable dangers of the voyage? This is not fervent declamation. I claim for this putting of the case, the credit which is due to correct analogy and conclusive argument. We prepare for the severe side of *Nature*—why ignore the severe aspect of *God?* We think of fire in building our houses—why forget it in building our character? On one side of our life we are constantly on the outlook for danger—why forget it where the destiny of the soul is concerned? When a man builds his house or his ship strongly, we do not say that he is the victim of fear; we never think of calling him a fanatic; we rather say that he is a cautious and even scientific man: so, when I make appeal to the severity of God—to His fire, His sword, His destroying tempests and floods—I am not preaching the mere terrors of the Lord, as if I would move by alarm, rather than persuade by love; I am simply faithful to *facts*—I am reminding those who hear me that God is not less complete than the seasons which He has made, and bidding them, in the summer of His mercies, not to forget the winter of his judgments!

The so-called success of the bad man has yet to stand the strain of Divine trial. God will go through our money to see if it has been honestly obtained. He will search our reputation, and our hypocrisy will not be able to conceal the reality of the case from His all-seeing eye. He will examine our title-deeds, and if we have ill-gotten property, He will set the universe against us, until we restore it with penitence or have it wrenched out of our keeping by retributive misfortune. Yea, though our strength be as a mountain, it shall be wasted; though it be as a hill, it shall be blown away, and the world shall see how poorly they build who build only for the light and quietness of summer. Don't say the winter is *long* in coming; it *will* come, and *that* is the one fact which should move your concern and bring you to wisdom. In these days, when the world is in a constant panic, when men are over-driving one another, when commerce has been turned into gambling, and sharp-shooters pass as honest men, it is needful that we all remind ourselves that God will judge the people righteously, and try all men by the test of His own holiness. Remember, we are not stronger than our weakest point, and that true wisdom binds us to watch even the least gate that is insufficient or insecure.

2. *Look at the doctrine of the text as an encouragement to all men who*

work under the guidance of God. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." God thus declares Himself gentle to those who truly need Him. He promises nothing to the self-sufficient; He promises much to the needy. The text shows the principle upon which Divine help is given to men—the principle of conscious need and of willingness to be guided. Let a man say, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," and God will leave him to his proud sufficiency; let him, on the other hand, feel his weakness and insignificance, and God will bless him with all the help which he requires in the most difficult passages of his life. A true apprehension of this doctrine will give us a new view of daily providences—viz., that *men who are apparently most destitute may in reality be most richly enjoying the blessings of God.* Clearly, we are not to judge human life by outward conditions. We are not to overlook the beneficent law of *compensation.* Those who apparently have least may in reality have most. Who can tell what visions of himself God grants to men who cannot see His outward works? Blindness may not be merely so much defect, it may be but another condition of happiness. Who can say that it does not bring the soul so much nearer God? Be that as it may, it is plainly taught in the text that God undertakes to lead all men who will yield themselves to His guidance, and that their defects, instead of being a hindrance, are, in reality, the express conditions on which offers of Divine help are founded. It is *because* we are blind that He will lead us. It is *because* we are weak that He will carry us. It is *because* we have nothing that He offers to give us all things. God, addressing Himself to human weakness, is the complement of God wasting mountains and hills; God, shedding the morning dew on awaking flowers, is the complement of God affrighting the earth with tempests and vexing the sea with storms. There is an unsearchable depth of pathos in the doctrine that God is gentle to human weakness, and that He will make up with His own hands what is wanting in human faculty. Strong men seldom care for the weak, the blind are put on one side, the incapable are dismissed with impatience; but here is God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, taking the blind man's hand and leading him like a child specially beloved!

From all this it is clear that self-sufficiency on the part of man is an offence to God; not only so, it is a vexation to man himself. All efforts at completeness and independence of strength end in mortification. Towards one another we are to be self-reliant; towards God we are to be humble, dependent, all-trustful. How infinite is our folly in seeking to remove, by our own power, the mountains and hills that bar our way!

God says He will remove them for us; why should we turn away His mighty arm? He claims such work as His own; why should we meddle with it as if we could do it better than He? But some of us *will* meddle: we persist in seeking omnipotence in our own hands, and trying to reach the tone which winds and seas obey. We *will* do it. The devil urges us, and we yield. He says, "Be your own God," and we snatch at the suggestion as a prize. He says, "*This* little mountain you might surely manage to remove;" and then we set to work with pickaxe and shovel, and lo, the mountain grows as we strike it! Still the devil says, "It stands to reason that you *must* be making some impression upon it; try again;" and we try again, and again we fail—the mountain does not know us, the rock resents our intrusion, and having wasted our strength, the devil laughs at our impotence, and tells us in bitter mockery that we shall do better next time! Yes! Next time—next time—and then next time—and then hell! God says to us, when we stand at the foot of great hills and mountains, "I will beat them into dust, I will scatter the dust to the winds; there shall be a level path for your feet, if you will but put your trust in me." I hold this to be a sublime offer. No man who has heard it ought to feel himself at liberty to act as if God had not made a proposition to him. And such propositions ought to endear God to our hearts. Here He is beside us, before us, round about us, to help, to lead, to bless us in every way: not a figure in the distant clouds, not an occasional appearance under circumstances that dazzle and confound us, but always at our right hand, always within reach of our prayer, always putting out His hand when we come to dangerous places. As a mere conception of God, this reaches the point of sublimity. The coarsest mind might dream of God's infinite majesty, but only the richest quality of heart could have discovered Him in the touch of gentleness and the service of condescension. Let us make such use of this revelation of the Divine character as will save us from turning our theology into the chief terror of our lives. Their theology is, indeed, to some men a frightful spectre. They would be happier if they were atheists. They fitfully slumber on the slopes of a volcano, and to them heaven itself is but the less of two evils. Behold! Behold! I call you to a God whose very terribleness may be turned into an assurance of security, and whose love is infinite, unchanging, eternal!

Men of business! ye whose barns are full, whose rivers overflow, on whose estates the sun has written "Prosperity," and into whose garners autumn has forced the richest of her golden sheaves, hear me! Know ye that these things are all gifts of God, and that He who gave them can also withdraw them? "I will destroy and devour at once—I will dry

up all their herbs." He has right of way through our fields and orchards; our vineyards and oliveyards are His, and He can blow upon them until they wither, and cause their blossom to go up like the dust. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree, yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Not a fibre of his root could be discovered! Not so much as a withered leaf drifted into a ditch could be traced! All gone—the great branches gone—the bark gone—the trunk gone—the root gone—and the very name had perished from the recollection of men! It is poor prosperity that is not held by God's favour. Gold goes a little way if it be not sanctified by prayer and giving of thanks. Bread cannot satisfy, unless it be broken by God's hands. Our fields may look well at night, but in the morning they may have been trampled by an invisible destroyer. Do not say I am urging you by fear; I deny the charge; it is because of coming winter that I advise men to build strongly, and it is because of inevitable judgment that I call upon men to walk in the light of righteousness in all the transactions of life.

Children of God! ye especially who are called to suffering and weakness and great unrest because of manifold defect, God offers you his hand. Are you blind? He says, I will lead the blind. Are you full of care? He says, Let me carry your burden. Are you in sorrow? He says, Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee. Is there a very steep road before you at this moment—in business, in your family, in your responsibilities? He says, I will make waste mountains and hills, and the rough places shall be made plain. So you are not alone—not alone, for the Father is with you. He is with you *as* a Father, not to try your strength, but to increase it; not to make experiments upon you, but to magnify His grace in you by working out for you a wonderful redemption. Rest on God. His arm, not your own, must be your strength. Fear God, and no other fear shall ever trouble you.

Now, let us pray; let us pray with our whole heart, and the terrible God will show us the fulness of His mercy:—

Almighty God, clothed with thunder, and carrying with Thee the lightning which makes men tremble with great fear, we have heard that Thou canst make waste mountains and hills, and shake the foundations of the earth; we have heard also of Thy loving-kindness and tender mercy, and our souls have hoped in Thy grace. We bless Thee that in Christ Jesus, our only and ever-sufficient Saviour, even Thy terrors are blessings,

and the multitude of Thy mighty works show how immeasurably profound is Thy love. When Thou tearest, Thou dost bind up again; when Thou castest down Thy people, it is that Thou mayest surprise and gladden them by unlooked-for exaltation. Thou hast Thy way in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of Thy feet. Thy chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands, yet Thou stoopest to take up the weary lamb, and to revive the heart of Thy children. Though Thou canst thunder in Thy universe until all beings pause in the silence of fear, yet canst Thou speak to desponding men in a still small voice, and heal them with the gentlest comfort. We desire to know Thee in all the revealed aspects of Thy nature, and to walk before Thee with the carefulness of reverence and the joy of love. Thou art our refuge and strength; Thou art our shield and buckler; Thou givest grace and glory; Thou comest to us in the snows of winter and in the tender buddings of the spring; Thou temperest judgment with mercy. May the meditation in which we have engaged this day subdue us, yet cheer our hearts as with renewed hope! May Thy servants fear Thee, O great King; may Thy saints rejoice in Thee, O gracious Father! We quail before Thy power, we are made glad by Thy love; may we rejoice with trembling! Specially draw our tenderest affections to the Cross of the dying Saviour. In that Cross we see how wonderful is Thy righteousness, and how boundless is Thy love. It reveals to us the terribleness of the law, and shows to us the source and sufficiency of the Gospel; we would abide at the Cross, so mournful, yet so full of hope, until we abhor our sin, and become partakers of Thy holiness. Blessed One, life of all life, and glory of all light, Creator, Father, Saviour, complete in us the hallowed mystery of redemption by the Cross. Amen.

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 17th, 1870.

NIGHT AND MORNING.

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee."—John xxi. 3.

Do not we want men in life who will give the starting word, men who have propositions to make, and men who will take upon themselves the responsibility of working out those propositions? "I go a fishing," says Simon Peter. "I do not ask what *you* are going to do, but I distinctly tell you what I am going to do." And what is the effect of it? The effect of it is that other people at once go with him. Such is life. A man of invention, a man of conceptive energy of mind, a man who has notions, and ideas, and propositions, and who boldly says, "I am going to do this,"—men of that kind are wanted in the world. And so are the "We." You cannot always do with the "I" of the text, you must also have the "we." "I go." "We also go with thee." That is just the way in which the "I" and the "we" should stand; the "I" first, the individual man first, the personal consecration first, and then will follow support, and popularity, and crowd, and patronage, and association, and all the things that usually come after mightiness of will and distinctness of determination. Have you ever tried that in your own way of life, ever distinctly turned round upon anybody, and said, "I am going to serve the Lord"? You have no idea what a wonderful preacher you would be if you would say that tenderly, and humbly, and prayerfully, and with all tremblingness of self-insufficiency and perfect dependence upon the great everlasting Power. Have you ever said so in your family—said to your children, "Children, I am going to follow the Saviour"? Why, you do not know how all the little things would look up at you so brightly and trustingly, and you would be twice over a father to them. In general life get a notion, get a distinct idea, and boldly say, trusting to God, "I am going to do this," and no man ever speaks this kind of word in a right spirit and with a right intent, without influencing the circle of which he is the centre. Do not be afraid of what you call

egotism. It will be your blame if there is any egotism. I heard a lady say, some time ago, that she had laid the foundation stone of a chapel, and delivered an address, "And," said she, "I never said 'I' all the time." Why, poor creature, she said nothing but "I" if she had known it. When you know that you are not saying "I," then you are most egotistic. The moment self-consciousness comes in, and you say, "Oh, that is the first personal pronoun, and that looks very egotistic; I shall change that 'I' for a 'we' or throw the personal into the impersonal," —the moment you begin trifling in that way with your grammar or speech, you become intensely and unpardonably egotistic.

I want to show you, as we go along this narrative, that we must have two kinds of men in society, the man of distinct aim, the man of so-called egotistic power, and the men who fall in with his arrangements, and go along to assist him in his work, to divide his responsibilities and multiply his joys.

"They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing." What a report to give of a man's work! And is there not a great lesson here for workers of all kinds? What was the report of these men? Two words,—"night" and "nothing." What a summary of life—"Night" and "nothing!" And they were not to blame for it either. And here I wish to speak a word to those often discouraged friends who are doing their little best, and yet find, when they come to reckon up what they have been doing, that it just comes to these two words, "night" and "nothing." Well, let us think about your case awhile. You did go forth, did you not, to work, to serve, to set yourself in co-operation with Almighty God? It might be in a little sphere in a humble kind of way, but you had the intention to do right, and you went out to do it, and you have been labouring all the time, and it has come to "night" and "nothing." Do not be discouraged; do not be cast down; do not look at other people, and say, "See what wonderful results have attended the ministry, the service, the labouring of such people as these." If you have been doing your work in a right spirit, perseveringly, devoutly, without self-sufficiency, continuously, and hopefully, you have nothing to do with the results at all. Oh, when will people give over adding up? What have I, as a minister of the gospel, to do with adding up? In proportion to the greatness, the scope, the grandeur, and spirituality of my work, is there nothing that can be added up. You must take care lest your arithmetic destroy your enthusiasm, and quench your inspiration. What we have to do is to work as though everything depended upon us, and then to go away and cry mightily unto God, as if we had no power at all. Now it is very possible that in business, in the family, in the Church, in the Sunday-school, in the missionary field, "night" and "nothing" may sum up pretty much from the human side the results of our labour. But let me pause, lest any dog should eat this bread, for not a crumb of this bread must be had by

any living dog. If a man shall say, "Well, that is just my case,—'night' and 'nothing'—and I do not trouble about it: I shall live as I list; I shall put forth no effort: if anything shall come of this work, and this doing of things, well and good, but I shall not concern myself about it;" I say that is a dog who has no right to eat a solitary crumb of this bread that cometh down from heaven, this encouragement to true labourers, this word cheering, and helpful, and hopeful, which is intended only for men who do work, and who do pray, and yet who have only "night" and "nothing" as their apparent earthly reward.

Now let us go on to the next verse, but let us shade our eyes lest the light be too much for us. "But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." "Morning" and "Jesus." Will you not write a poem on these words,—"Morning" and "Jesus"? Or put the two words together, and just see the rapid variations of human life;—"night" and "nothing," "morning" and "Jesus." And that is Christian life, and in as far as we are intensely, vitally Christian do we enter into the mystery of these apparent contradictions. Meet a Christian man under certain circumstances, and you will see, as it were, upon his countenance, "night" and "nothing." You say, "How gloomy he is, and how much depressed. Why there was no spring in him, no tunefulness, no inspiration, only 'night' and 'nothing.'" Very well. See him the next day, or month, or year, and his countenance glows like the morning, and his voice is tuneful, and he brings with him an atmosphere pure, and vital, and vitalising. That is Christian life,—sometimes very low, but always in Christ, and always on the rock. Dwell upon these sweet and tuneful words a little longer if you please. Look at them if you can see, because the eye will help the ear. "When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." Why, He had been on the shore all night if they had but known it. We poor navigators and fishermen are tossed upon the nightly deep, the dark sea, the troubled waters, and we cannot even see the shore, but it is our joy to believe that He who makes the morning is standing yonder, and that we shall see him by-and by. What is this life of ours but just a troubled lake, heaving and swelling and tossing, breaking into billows and dashing into foam, rising into storms, and occasionally falling into a beautiful calm? What is it but just something like that? And when our fishing is done and we give it up, and want to get home, yonder the Saviour is standing on the shore, and saying, "Children." My friend, have you any Christ on your shore? Have you any hope that when your little fishing is done, and you have passed through "night," and caught "nothing," you will see Him on the shore who makes the "morning"? It will be a poor, wretched life for you if there be not in the midst of it, and round about it this inspiring hope, this sure abiding and transporting confidence.

"But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." Have you thought much about this power of concealment on the part of God? Dwell

upon that notion occasionally, and it will cheer you very much,—this power of disguise, this power of not being God, as it were, to a man. We speak of blessings in disguise. What if God be always in disguise? What if the brightest revelation of God which is possible to us down here turn out in the long run to have been but a disguise, as it were a faint attempt to do the impossible? "But the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." When they walked to Emmaus and the stranger drew near and talked to them as they had never been talked to before, "they knew not that it was Jesus." "Their eyes were holden that they should not know him." And is it not sometimes good for us that we should not know God in some of His dispensations, that for a small moment (can you measure that?) He should forsake us? That momentary abandonment brings in His everlasting kindness with such richness, and glory, and sweetness. Let us think of this for our own uplifting of soul, and comfort, and confidence,—that Jesus Christ is always near though we do not always see him. Let it be the comfort and strength of our hearts that though we may not always see Him, His eye is never for a moment taken from us. We see Him not, and yet we do see Him with the vision of the soul. We cannot point Him out as John pointed Him out, yet we are conscious that He is close at hand, watching our service and making our morning.

"Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No." What a report to give of the Christian condition! What struggles this Church of Christ had at the beginning, and what struggles it has now! "Have ye any meat, members of the kingdom of Christ, apostles of this kingdom, and teachers of this truth?" And they said, "No." It is perfectly possible to be a Christian and yet to have no meat. You remember that wretch in the gospels who is described by his clothes and his dinner,—just those two things said about him. "A certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." A man summed up by his coat and his dinner, and there is nothing else to be said about him. He had purple and plenteous fare, and that is his history. "Children, have ye any meat? And they answered Him, No." To such straits may good men be driven! Through such struggling and difficulty has the Church passed. Sometimes we now hear that the days of persecution are gone, the days of struggling have gone. Shall I venture an answer to that little riddle? I think I can make it out on the spot, and satisfactorily. You say, "Why have the days of persecution gone?" I answer inquiringly, "Have not the days of godliness gone?" "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" and if there are no martyrs now it may be, perhaps, because in some degree the spirit of utter unworldliness and perfect consecration to God and heaven may have decayed. I will not boldly say that such is the case, but I will now and again put to myself this

question, "Is it not true that the days of persecution, and struggle, and poverty, and difficulty have gone, because the spirit of lofty, surpassing, and magnanimous devotion to Christ has in some degree dwindled and decayed?"

Here then is a beautiful scene for us: let us dwell on the picture awhile. The disciples without their Master on yonder water fishing, fishing all night, taking nothing, the morning coming silently around them, and a figure on the shore, and to the disciples it was nothing but a figure, only a distant thing without special life, without peculiar significance, nothing to them but a figure;—and yet it was the Saviour. Is not that a very lovely, pathetic picture? Does it not touch the imagination and move the heart?

Now we come from the picture to the interview opened by these words, "Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No." What did He say to them? He said what He always says, the directing word. Hear Him:—"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." What does He know about it, standing on the land, a stranger, they fishermen by profession who have spent a life-time in this work? Who is He that He should know what to say to them in that hour? They did cast, "and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." Is there not a lesson here for all Christian workers? What is it? This prayer should never be absent from our lips, "Lord Jesus, thou knowest which is the right side of the ship in this business of mine, in these family concerns of mine, in this Christian ministry of mine, in this missionary work which I have undertaken. Blessed, gentle Christ, teach me how and where to cast the net." Brethren, go out fishing without Christ and you will have "night" and "nothing;" work according to His counsel and the sea itself shall open its caverns and hiding-places, and riches and treasures—all things are yours when ye are Christ's. Jesus Christ knows about everything, knows about fishing, knows about shopkeeping, knows about banking, knows about all kinds of commerce. He knows your Stock Exchange better than you know it, and your Bank of England, and all your little mercantile concerns. It is an awful and insufferable calumny to say that religion is not business, and business is not religion. There is a great black line drawn by some hands between the two. It is wrong to do that. If I were going a fishing in the common literal sense of the term, let me have Christ with me. If I open a shop in one of these streets, let Christ always stand behind the counter with me, telling me which is the right balance, and the right measure, and the right standard, teaching me how to keep my books, and how to conduct my commercial intercourse; and if I ascend to the highest place in political and social life, let Christ be with me and I will beat you every one if you do not take Him. If you young men would only take hold of that notion that Christ knows about fishing and

all the common concerns of life, that He holds the whole earth in His hands, you would in a spirit of unboastfulness, of loving trust, of self-insufficiency, be enabled to work your way through "night" and "nothing" to "morning" and "multitudes." Do not ask me to prove that by any logical process. If you say, "How do you prove that?" I say, "I am the proof." If a man can only prove his propositions and demonstrate his sermons on a black board, he will never make anything out of the world. He must himself be the sermon and be the proof. He must say, "I am the life, and the truth, and the way under Christ, and in Christ, and according to Christ's revelation in me," and then no man shall be able to pluck him out of his Father's hand.

Another very beautiful incident in the seventh verse,—"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." O thrilling revelation, wonderfully true suggestion that! Love has the quickest ear, love has the sharpest, keenest, brightest eye. Did you hear that child cry just now, sitting in your friend's room? No, you did not hear anything of it, because you are a stranger. But look how the mother runs away. "Where are you going?" "Oh," she says, "I heard the child cry." "What a hearing ear a mother has! I never heard it cry, but she heard it." Love is always on the alert; love is always quick. If I do anything for a friend that loves me, he sees in it things that I did not see myself. If I read the book of a friend whom I really and truly revere and love, his book shines out upon me, and I see in it riches of thought and beauties of expression of which the author himself perhaps is unconscious; and in proportion as I love the Saviour do I see Him everywhere, and say about the common concerns of life, "Why, this is the Lord." I receive unexpected bounties—"It is the Lord." I am unexpectedly delivered out of great difficulties—"It is the Lord." My way is opened up in life—"It is the Lord." My sicknesses are healed—"It is the Lord." Just in proportion as we grow in love do we grow in the faculty of interpretation, and the time will come when this blessed book will be expounded by love, by heart, by feeling. We shall not go down in intellect, we shall not decay in any of those scholastic faculties which are worthily held in high estimation, but over all, beyond them all there will come this interpreting power of love, which shall give us new interpretations according to the newness and difficulty of our circumstances. Who was it that found out it was the Lord? Who was it that gave divinity to yonder figure? Who was it that brought that figure out in all its grandeur, and lustre, and purity? It was "that disciple whom Jesus loved;" and if I want a guide through this book I say, give me a man that loves, the man that has a great, sensitive, far-sighted heart, and he will guide me through difficulties which any other interpreter will regard as insoluble or insurmountable.

Then another beautiful thing comes out. You observe in the first

instance Simon Peter says, "I go a-fishing;" in the next a higher incident, it was the "disciple whom Jesus loved" who gave the guiding word, "It is the Lord." So we have different methods of doing things, and each man is called to his own work. There must be a man getting up now and again who says, "I go," and who causes other people to say, "We also go;" and there must be another type, a higher type of man still, who will say to us again and again in life, "It is the Lord," "It is the Lord." It does not all come from Simon Peter; it does not all come from one man. We are many members, but we are one body, and if any man here can speak a true word for Christ, and say something that will help in the great service, let him be recognized as God's servant though he does not say what we say, and though he happens to make suggestions which we never thought of.

Now Simon Peter comes again. "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he cast himself into the sea." The same man, you observe—"I go a fishing"—a going man, a moving man, not a contemplatist, not a mystic, but an active man—"I go," "I cast myself into the sea." Beautiful consistency in the character. But what a very improper way of doing it! To think of any man casting himself into the sea—what a shockingly improper thing to do! No: there is nothing improper to the individual, distinctive enthusiasm of this man. If any other man of the number had cast himself into the sea, he would have made a fool of himself; he would have been out of place altogether; it would not have been like him; he must go round in the little boat and work his way somehow. But it was natural for this man to cast himself into the sea. My only wonder is that he got into his coat, and did not instantly cast himself into the sea; but he only snatched it up, I know, and was in the sea before he could pull it properly on. But why this haste? Ah, this man's heart had been wrung for the last few days. He had denied his Master, and cursed, and sworn, and said, "I know not the man," and the very moment he hears of his being yonder he casts himself into the sea, and goes to have an interview with his Lord. Who can tell what passed between them when the one stood on the shore and the other fell down in the dust and cried, "God be merciful unto me"? Penitence will cause a man to do that kind of thing. According to the depth, and intensity, and reality of his penitence will he resort to methods of getting near his Lord. Do not let us therefore condemn people who have other methods of going than our own. He wanted to say something, and he did not want anybody to be there when he said it; and there are times when we want to be alone with the Lord. We do not always want to pray in these public buildings; we want to get away sometimes, and enter into our closet, and shut the door, and pray to our Father in secret, and tell Him what we have done, tell Him of things we dare not name to our dearest friend, and shed before Him such tears as

never rolled down our cheeks in public. And now he is gone, and I like to think of his going so, and talking thus to his Lord, and I am sure no man ever went in that way to his Lord without his Lord instantly meeting him with fulness of love and tenderness of pardon. Dear friend, have you occasion to seek your Lord in this way? Are you saying to yourself, "I am only waiting until I know where He is, and I will go to Him." He is here now. He is in this very house to-day, and He waits to be gracious; and if you have betrayed Him, and abused Him, and been false to Him, and told people you did not know Him, you may go to Him now, and such is His love that before you can tell half your tale He will give you all His mercy, and pity, and pardon.

And then we want the other class of men. "The other disciples came in a little ship, dragging the net with fishes." We like to see a man who cares nothing about the fishes, who instantly rushes into the sea and passes over to his Lord, but it is an exceedingly convenient thing in life to have a number of other men quite of a different class, who will come in a little boat and bring the little fishes with them. Yes, we want you all. You slow-headed, slow-footed, careful people, you judicious and discreet people who count the fishes one by one and set them down in your housekeeper's book, and ask at the end of the week where they are gone to, we want you. We want your prudent and careful people, Martha as well as Mary, all of you, and we want you young people full of fire, and passion, and enthusiasm, who cannot stay to count whether there are a hundred and fifty fishes or a hundred and fifty-three, but who go at your work with a cordiality, and rapture, and noble youthful eagerness. We want all of you. In the sanctuary there is room for everybody, for every faculty, for every emotion, for the most solid attainments in character, and for all that is youthful and hopeful, though oftentimes, perhaps, rash and indiscreet.

Then, what have we this morning? We have a picture and an interview, a picture of life, life on the sea, life doing its work, having a sign written upon it, "Night and nothing." We have Christ on the shore, Christ watching, Christ waiting, Christ enquiring, Christ directing, and then the great and glorious result of working under His counsel. And is it not the same in our teaching, in the school, in our evangelising labours, in the city, and in our grand missionary enterprises? Let our brethren go away to far-off shores in their own strength, and you will have in your missionary reports but two words—"night" and "nothing;" but let them go in Christ's name and for Christ's sake, and in Christ's company, and with Christ's Spirit, and we shall, not perhaps to-morrow or next May, but in the grand summing up of this mediatorial economy have "morning" and "multitude," and inability on the part of man to bring all that God has given, and God Himself must assist in gathering up the great results of a Christ-directed and Christ-sustained ministry.

The City Temple.

Report of a Service conducted by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 17th, 1870.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, do Thou graciously prepare our hearts to wait profitably upon Thee. May our praise be lofty; may our thanksgiving overflow; may our confession be marked by the deepest contrition; and may our intercession be prevalent through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. We have come to think about Jesus Christ our blessed and infinitely sufficient Saviour, who loved us and gave Himself for us, and who is able to save unto the uttermost, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for us. We rejoice that when we talk of Christ He Himself draws near; and though for a time He may hold our eyes lest we see Him, yet will He, by exposition of His blessed Word, cause our hearts to burn within us while the Scriptures are being opened to us. We rejoice that men cannot talk about Christ in Christ's absence; wherever two or three are gathered together in His name there He Himself is, not outside, not at a distance, but in the midst. We are glad to know that ever on our lonely and saddened way from the city of peace, when we think our hopes have been disappointed, and our gladdest desires have been quenched in sorrow, even there the Stranger is transfigured into a Saviour; the lonely wanderer becomes to us the Revealer of Divine truth. It is our joy, therefore, to know that inasmuch as we have now come to worship the Saviour, the Saviour Himself will make our hearts glad with inexpressible joy. We would call upon our soul and all that is within us to praise the Lord. Thou hast done great things for us

whereof we are glad. Thou hast anointed our head with oil; Thou hast spread our table in the wilderness; Thou hast filled our mouth with good things; Thou hast renewed our youth like the eagle's; Thou hast kept our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling, and our soul from death. What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; we will make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation; the strong man in his strength, the womanly heart in all its inspiration of love, the little child's voice, in all its unsuspecting gladness, Thou shalt hear in the sanctuary praising Thy name. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, majesty, and dominion, and exaltation, riches and sovereignty, and homage be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

We confess our sins. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We take sin and shame to ourselves, and are our own witnesses that we have done the things we ought not to have done; we have proved that our own heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others; even if in our hand there be no public crime, yet in our heart is the very seat of the devil. If there be no outward stream of pollution to which men can point in condemnation of our lives, yet are there springs and fountains of iniquity in the depths of our nature, and our heart is like the troubled sea. We confess and mourn our evil; but is there not a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness? Doth not the blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanse from all sin? Was He not wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities? Was not the chastisement of our peace laid upon Him, and by His stripes are we not healed? This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. God be merciful unto us, and let us know the completeness and glory of the Lord's redemption. Save us, we humbly beseech Thee. In the pitifulness of Thy great mercy help us and save us, we humbly beseech Thee. O Lord Christ Jesu, Saviour of the world, Image of the Father, and Brother of man, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee; then shall our hearts overflow with joy, and our life shall testify that Thou openest the doors of the prison-house. Let Thy mercy come to us in whatsoever forms Thou seest right and best for us; even if Thy mercy should come cloaked with heavy afflictions, still may the door of our heart be opened, and may the voice of our desire and trust say, "It is the Lord." If it should come in sunny prosperity, doubling the brightness of our days, causing our olive-yards and our fig-trees to bring forth abundantly,

giving us blessing in basket and in store, may we know that we have nothing that we have not received; and to whom much is given, of them shall much be required. If Thou shouldest see fit to lay us aside, to appoint unto us wearisome days and nights, to withdraw us from battle that we may take no part in it, to disappoint us just at the moment when victory appears to be within reach—if Thou dost dash the golden chalice from our lips just as we are going to quench our thirst—enable us to say, still lovingly, with triumph and assurance of righteousness on Thy part, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight." In whatsoever form Thy mercy cometh unto us, may we welcome it as the angel of God, and be glad evermore in the Lord. Put within us Thy Holy Spirit. We would be holy, as Thou art holy; we would be wise, and true, and strong, and noble, and gentle, condescending, meek, patient, charitable. We would abound in all the fruits and evidences of a godly life. To this end do Thou baptize us with the Holy Ghost. Hear our prayer for any special cases of joy, sorrow, doubt, conflict. As the rain cometh down from heaven and watereth the roots of the great tree, and baptizeth the tiniest flower in the garden and the mead, so may the rains of Thy blessing fertilise us all—the strongest and the weakest, the eldest and the youngest—and may we know of a surety that God is in our midst. Bless us as a Church and people: may the ministry of this house be inspired of Christ; may the image and likeness of Christ be its token; may the spirit of crucifixion with Christ characterise it constantly; may no evil word be spoken from this pulpit; may no unsound doctrine be promulgated here; with all simplicity and manliness, and mighty human sympathy, and gentle manly feeling, and divine inspiration, may Thy servant speak here a living man to living souls—a dying teacher to scholars who must die. May no root of bitterness spring up to trouble us; may the evil speaker be discouraged; may the loose tongue be left to utter its folly in solitude; may the indifferent be shamed into zeal; may the prejudiced be confounded and converted; and may those who would gladly serve the Lord and help his cause be honoured and enriched with spiritual blessing, clothed with power, blessed with manifold tokens of Divine approbation. The God of the sanctuary hear us, the Saviour of the world draw us to His wondrous cross, the Holy Spirit, last and highest revelation of Godhead, work mightily in us till our understanding be all of light and our heart be full of love. Amen!

The Sermon.

ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."—MATTHEW ii. 18.

I PAUSE at this point to say that men very often misinterpret their circumstances. Joseph does not stand alone so far as the principle of this text is concerned. Men do not know anything as it really is. They see but parts and shadows of things—not realities, and essences and divinities. There is no man who can interpret his life altogether. Taking it on its surface, taking it in its angles, taking it in its depth, there is a point at which he pauses and confesses that he can make little or nothing of it. Think of Joseph, the man of the text. He is standing aside afflicted with a great trouble. A most unexpected and tormenting affliction has befallen the man; the main hope of his life has been overshadowed, and his chief purposes have been broken off and dashed to the ground, and he is reasoning with himself, "How can this be overcome? I wish to be just and yet to be gentle. I would do as I would be done by; what is the way out of this difficulty?" And as he stands at that point, reasoning so with himself, and multiplying the shadows that gather around his life, I say he does not stand alone so far as the principle of the controversy which is vexing his soul is concerned. And the angel of the Lord says to him, "You are wrong from beginning to end. You only see the shadow, not the light. You see but a little piece here and there, you cannot put things together and make God's sense of them. Thou art fearing something. Thou art going to adopt a method of escape. Thou art endeavouring to find the easiest and best way out of this difficulty. Man! It is *God* that makes this difficulty. It is *God* that is threading His way through this crooked path. It is the light that has enclosed itself in this great shadow."

And in the solution he is not alone, as he was not alone in the difficulty. I say it without hesitation, with joy, with a conviction of its literal truthfulness, that we have all, if we have truly understood life and made the best of it, received out of our embarrassments, and difficulties, and disappointments, the purest and serenest joys that have gladdened and ruled our souls. I always make a distinction amongst troubles. I do not gather all men's afflictions together into one mass and say, "There! they are all for the best." Nothing of the kind. You must discriminate, separate, classify; you must go into detail, you must say, how did this come, and how did that come? You must

interrogate your troubles up to a given point. And only in proportion as they answer satisfactorily are you to deal with them as the seeds and germs and prophecies of God.

If troubles come upon a man as he is going along the path of duty, righteousness and Divine conviction, if troubles come unexpectedly upon him without his being consciously the cause or occasion of them in any culpable degree, then these are the shadows out of which God will speak to him; these are the fires out of which man will hear the voice of benediction; these are the troubles that shall be turned into joy. So I pause again to discriminate distinctly between the man who is always pulling the house of his life about his own ears, who is never at rest except when he is pulling something to pieces and doing mischief, and the man who, having God's law in him, is striving to live according to its rhythm, and to exemplify its virtue. The one man shall have trouble upon trouble; the other, too, shall have trouble upon trouble, but his accumulating troubles shall become sources and fountains of joy.

The marriage of Mary I regard as a very important circumstance in Christian theology. Jesus Christ was bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He was born as we are born. Begotten by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. This brings Jesus Christ near to us. When I am told that that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost, I am put off to a great distance. I cannot approach that side of the case. But when I find that Mary was the sister of us all—an ordinary woman, and that she was Jesus Christ's mother, the Saviour comes near to me, touches me with the hands of a common brotherhood, and speaks to me, though with sublime and inimitable accent, the same language which I myself speak. Here, then, is a great mystery wrought by the Holy Ghost—given to us by the hands of our sister—God, God with us. Great is the mystery of godliness. Great is the mystery of sin!

Can you, even the most sagacious of parents, say concerning your little boy, "This boy was born to —," and then indicate his destiny? Your boy is a puzzle to you—a mystery to you—an unsolved problem. Even in your most sanguine hours, when you see a beauty in the child that other eyes cannot detect, even then you can only say, "I hope this boy will turn out something good." You cannot say more. "I hope he will become a clever man, a wise man, a good man." There you end. Beyond that you cannot go. Even your affection hesitates to go beyond that. But here is a Child with his destiny emblazoned on his forehead. As a *Child*, he comes with this declaration, "To save from sins." You say about a child, He is born to the throne of his country; he is the heir apparent, or the heir presumptive. You say about the rich man's child, he is born to a great fortune, but there is a *perhaps* in all those cases. There is a parenthesis in all these statements, and in all such parentheses lies the possibility of failure and ruin. But here is

Jesus Christ the child, not developing into a Saviour, not after many years turning out into something like a great redeeming life, but a Child come for this express purpose, and but for this purpose never would have come at all. Controversialists have not quite got over the birth of Christ yet; there are many knotty difficulties lying here which they cannot disentangle, except upon a strictly Christian basis. They must approach these difficulties in a Christian spirit, and solve them to Christian ends, or they cannot solve them at all. Here is the Child unborn. The angel says, "This Child shall be a *son*." *There* is a difficulty. Think of that! The Child is unborn, yet here is an open declaration that the coming Child shall be a *son*. And whilst the Child is unborn, and whilst he is but a Child, there, at that inceptive point, he is declared to be a *Saviour*. A bold speculation! The Child in the mother's arms declared to be a Saviour! Why, we have known children of godly parents, children of many prayers, turn out to be profane, licentious, devilish, confounding all speculations regarding ancestry and probable results of genealogy and training, as if they had reversed all natural processes and given the lie to all rules—inversions of nature! It was a dangerous thing, therefore, to say, if not an infinitely true thing, that any little child should be a Saviour. Reserve your prophecies until after the event, if you would be wise! When the man is gone, then tell us what he was; but if ye be not prophets of the Lord, speaking from the very centre of the universe, do not foretell anything, because Time is swiftly coming after you, and he will write *Mistake*, *mistake*, *lie*, *falsehood*, upon all words that were not spoken by inspiration of the Spirit of Truth.

This Child, then, was born with a special mission to sins. He came into the world to grapple with sin. We preach that all men are born in sin—that all men are by nature the children of wrath, even as others; and we do not preach that as a theological tenet which we have learned from somebody, but as a heart-dogma that has been wrought into our very nature by a bitter and tormenting consciousness. But this Child was born to grapple with sin from his infancy; He was born to bear a distinct relation to *sin;* every word He spake, every deed He did, was to relate to *sin*. A great destiny, and a very trying thing to say in the beginning, because if in all these pages we can lay so much as our finger-tip upon *one* instance in which He has swerved from his destiny, then we can fight a winning battle against Him!

"Now, all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." God lays His hand upon the past of human history, and upon the future; it is one story. God does not come into human history at this point or at that; He has never been out of it. The announcements of one age are the men of another. God says, To-day I will work a wonder in your eyes; ye shall see marvellous things;

I will beat down the proud throne and the great mountain. He says that, and then leaves us there. And a thousand years go by; the proud throne is still there, and the great mountain rears its shoulders through a thousand summers and a thousand winters. Men say, "The word has been forgotten." But the word is there. It is a factor in human history, and is working, and will work. It may be in ten thousand years the word comes up, and the men of the day say to one another, "All this is done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." Because true words spoken by child, or woman, or man, or angel, are all tending towards incarnation, fulfilment, sovereignty, and we do not know what shall be yet. There are still many unfulfilled predictions, but if true they will shape themselves into form, and will yet rule the world. Great events require preparation. God puts a word into a man's heart to-day, and that words sings to him, speaks comfortably to him, he falls again and again upon that word. When things are apparently against him he says, "Yes, but did not God say so and so?" and that word is to him as a nightingale in the darkness of his night-life. O never did bird sing so sweetly, so lusciously, so tunefully, so hopefully! And God is always carrying His word forward to incarnation, and many a Bethlehem He has on the long road of the future. Wonderful is the connection between the prophecies and the facts,—"This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet." God will never let any true man fail of seeing the reward of his speech, his actions, his sufferings. The prophet, though in heaven, knew that this was a fulfilment of his Word. The prophets are only behind the screen; they are just on the thither side of the veil, and to-day they are seeing the results of their prophecies, and are being made glad in the Lord's presence. To some of us it is given to speak a word only, that exhausts our mission. We desire to see the day of its fulfilment, but cannot do so; but in as far as it is a true word its fulfilment shall surely come, and we shall see its realisation, only from another standpoint. Let us take these things into account, to cheer us in many bewilderments and perplexities of life. The father and the mother have often pinched themselves, that they might give their child a little more schooling and a little better opportunity in life, and have borne their sufferings and their self-denial quietly and even gladly. They sometimes said, "We should like to see our boy lifting up his head among yonder band of learned, illustrious, noble men. It will be a proud day for us when we see our son taking his seat among them." And they do not see it. They are cut down, they are borne away into the great darkness; and their son comes to eminence, and honour, and exaltation. Their prayers and their services are realised in him, and he himself says sometimes, "I wish the old man could have seen me now, it would have repaid him for many a kind word and helpful deed. I wish my mother could have seen me. She would have been

glad. How her eyes would gleam with a holy and divine fire!" Who can tell what they see? There is nothing between us and the invisible but a veil. Who can say that it is not to them who are on yonder side transparent? Who can say that we are not victimised by the dullness of our physical vision? That they see when we little imagine they are looking? I rather incline to the higher side of that speculation, and delight to believe that all the saints and the angels of God who have ever taken part in human history are taking some part in it to-day.

Jesus Christ, then, has come into the world. What is our relation to Him? Some of you will say, We are intending this morning to sit at the Lord's table to record the Lord's death.* You will be superficial interpreters if you imagine that Christ's birth was anything less than his death. We err, not knowing the Scriptures, when we separate Christ's life into little portions, and say in any sense that destroys their unity, This was His birth, and that was His death. The moment He came into the world He died; when He became a child, He became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Do not say, therefore, that we are to-day out of our chronology, and that we should be talking before the sacrament of the Lord's Supper of the death and not of the birth. The birth was the death, the death was the birth; the whole incarnation was the atonement. When He breathed our tainted air He began to die for the sins of the world. So our *chronology* is right enough; are our *hearts* right? The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Has He found us such? He has found many; but I want that poorest, most wretched wanderer of all to be found also! I want every little lamb to be gathered into the Saviour's bosom. All you dear little children, bright jewels, I want you; and you, stranger, turned in here this morning, perhaps hardly knowing why, tormented, vexed, distressed, embarrassed, friendless, far from home, I want *you* to make the acquaintance of this Child, this Man-child, this Child-man, this Brother, and Uplifter of the world. He did not die for a few of us, He tasted death for every man. He did not in his great heart think of this little nationality, or that. He is the propitiation for our sins, and *not for our only*, but for the sins of the whole world. Yonder Man does not think of little pieces or of parts of things, when He thinks He thinks eternities, when He loves He loves entireties. No fraction could ever satisfy His infinite love. Let that be a gospel to your hearts, and let those who have been hesitating about this gospel drop their little wretched verbal criticisms and hear this appeal, the appeal that claims the world, whose love, like a golden band, binds the whole creation in one unbroken circumference. Let an appeal like that help you towards right decision. Depend upon it no appeal like that ever could come out of any doctrine that had not in it the fulness of God's own heart. It is a *glorious* gospel.

* The discourse was first preached on a Sacramental occasion.

The City Temple.

Report of a Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 24th, 1870.

EVIL COMPACTS.

"Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works."—2 Chron. xx. 37.

These words were spoken concerning Jehoshaphat, who "walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord." He was a man of mature life, being thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. Notwithstanding the ripeness of his experience, and his really substantial character, he entered into a shipbuilding speculation with "Ahaziah King of Israel, who did very wickedly." Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah was the name of the royal firm of ship-builders. There is, of course, nothing wrong in ship-building, yet this firm soon fell into adversity. The ships were made—they were intended to go to Tarshish—but God broke them in pieces, and gave as His reason the fact that Jehoshaphat had entered into alliance with a bad partner,—"because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works." This is the ancient case which we have to modernize. We have partnerships, associations, and divers kinds of contracts in our own time, and it may be well to learn how far God takes notice of our business and our doings generally, lest we also have our ships broken, and our commerce laid in ruins.

I have been a good deal puzzled about some partnerships. I have known some strange associations. For example, I have known a church officer, who has led the devotions of the church, enter into partnership with a grovelling man who never hesitated to use profane language in the warehouse. I have known a generous supporter of good institutions associated with a man who would have sold his own father if he could have made money by the transaction. This has been a puzzle to me, because I have not known how two could walk together except they were agreed, and because I have gone upon the principle that light could have

no communion with darkness. I dare say there are explanations of the difficulty. It may be very convenient to have a partner who can make promises which he never intends to fulfil; it may smooth some parts of the commercial path to have an associate who can tell lies; it may be profitable to have an ally who can stoop to pick money out of the gutter, and who can wriggle round awkward corners, and use words which admit of two different constructions. All this, I can see, may be very convenient and profitable, but how about the righteousness of it? How does it look in the light of the sanctuary? Is it honest, true, lovely, pure? Of course it will be said that business is business, and religion is religion, that there is a distinction between the merchant and the man. Very well. Let us, merely for the sake of getting on, admit that, there remains this question: when the merchant is dammed for his wicked deeds, where will the *man* go? I am not aware that a man can serve the devil with one hand and God with the other. Where is the evidence that a man may have two characters, as he may have two coats? The principle of ill-associated partnerships works in two ways: the professing Christian finds it convenient to be able to remit all questionable work to the man who has made away with his conscience and honour, and the said man finds it very satisfactory to point to his professing partner as a proof and pledge that all is straightforward and upright. But is this as it ought to be? Do not let us slur over the question; let us face it steadily, honestly—with earnest intent to know the right and wrong of the case. You may say, that as partners you do not know each other except in a purely business light; you are strangers until you meet in business; you have no two pursuits in common; your tastes are marked by the strongest differences. Allow me to suggest that this explanation does not touch the point. A man cannot leave his *character* at home when he goes to business. The *character* is the man himself; he cannot leave *himself* behind. I am not talking about this particular taste or that; I am not speaking of some trifling eccentricity of habit, but about the quality, so to speak, of the man's very soul and life; and I repeat, it does puzzle me exceedingly to understand how light and darkness, right and wrong, heaven and hell, can enter into business relations.

I do not know that I have much chance of making a deep impression upon the old with regard to this great principle of identification and co-operation in business, but the *young* should take this lesson thoroughly to heart. You have your associations yet to form, you have to lay out your life to the best advantage, and it is more than possible that you may be tempted by the dazzling prospects which disingenuous men will not fail to paint for you. Explanations of difficulty will certainly be forthcoming; your conscientious scruples will be contemptuously poohpoohed. You will be told that in *these* times men must set their sails according to the wind, and must do as other people do, if they would

save themselves from bankruptcy and ruin in general. I hold up the example of Jehosaphat as a warning to you. There is something of infinitely greater consequence in the world than making a fortune. What you have to settle first and foremost is, *the moral basis* on which you are proceeding; you must get the full consent of your judgment, and heart, and conscience, before you give yourself up to any commercial course, and, having obtained such consent, according to the law of infinite righteousness, it should be a matter of very small moment to you whether you reach what is known in the world as the point of success, or whether you see little or nothing by way of result of your labour. Believe me, wealth is not everything; nay, more—a man's wealth may actually be a man's worst poverty. The curse of God rests upon all ill-gotten wealth. You may say that your part of the business is done with uprightness, and with an honest desire to keep the whole law of equity as between man and man, but this explanation is worse than a frivolous excuse when it is offered as a plea for bad partnerships. You are responsible for more than yourself in such a case; so long as you are identified with a man who can speak an untrue word or do a mean deed, you must of necessity be implicated in the whole of his vicious course. Beware of making refined distinctions. It is one thing to have a genius for drawing delicate lines as between yourself and your partner, and another to convince Him who sees the heart and tries the reins of the children of men, that you are not making a convenience of such distinctions, and gilding the works of unrighteousness. Look at the ship-building speculation at Ezion-gaber. The partners were men of immense resources, of the highest social position; their ships were actually built and prepared for the voyage, but God determined that they should never reach their destination; and when God commands the winds and the general forces of nature to beat against any man's speculation, it is utterly hopeless in such cases to fight against God. Have *God* for your partner, if you would make your business, in the highest sense of the term, honourable and successful. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The principle of the text is expansive enough to include other subjects of equal importance with that which has just been discussed. For example, the subject of *Marriage* is fairly within the scope of its application. "How can two walk together except they be not agreed?' "What communion hath Christ with Belial?" I need not pause to say that much of the happiness of human life depends upon the marriage unions which are formed. It is one thing to view the subject of marriage in the light of passion or convenience, and another to regard it as an institution by which human life may be developed and trained to the highest uses and enjoyments. I do not hesitate to lay down the broad principle that where there is incongruity of religious conviction

between man and woman, happiness of the deepest and purest kind is entirely out of the question. This principle is impartial in its application having equal reference to the woman as to the man, and to the man as to the woman. Take the case of a young woman who has deep religious convictions and sympathies: she has been trained under religious influences, her habits have been identified with the sanctuary from very early life; she has taught in the school, she has served in connection with many agencies of the church, and altogether her name has become honourably associated with benevolent operations; she is sought in marriage by a young man who has no religious convictions or sympathies, who, in fact, is worldly minded, grovelling, earthly; he may, indeed, be a man of education, of literary refinement, of good social position, of captivating address; nay, more—I will go further, and say, he may be a man against whom society is unable justly to point the finger of reproach. Wherever he is known he is respected for many social excellencies. Viewed in a strictly worldly sense, the young man may be pronounced an eligible candidate for the lady's hand, yet, in the presence of such conditions, I have distinctly to give it as my opinion that happiness of the highest kind is impossible in such a connection. There must, on the woman's part, be more or less of sacrifice of the convictions and sympathies which have distinguished her whole life. Her religious emphasis will be modified; more or less of a chill will subdue her Christian zeal; her works of benevolence will be in some degree impaired; there may not be any great outward difference in her manner, but her soul must have felt the desolation of an impoverishing influence. We have to consider, not what she is, so much as what she *might have been*, had she been united in marriage to one of kindred sympathy. To what an intense glow of love would her religious fervour have been increased! With what accelerated rapidity she might have moved in the ways of godliness! There would have been no secret force drawing her heart in the wrong direction; the whole atmosphere in which she lived would have been favourable to the development of Christian graces, and she would have abounded in all holy fruitfulness as the follower and servant of Jesus Christ. I will not dwell upon cases in which there is direct opposition as between husband and wife on religious questions; I prefer to take an instance in which the woman is a decided Christian in her convictions and habits, and where the man is accounted respectable in a worldly sense. There may never be a harsh word spoken on his part, he may never oppose any of his wife's inclinations, yet, by his own indifference, by his self-enjoyment, by his absence from her companionship when she is seeking the culture of her highest nature, he is, in reality, encountering her with a very dreadful hostility. May I not pause here to impress upon the young who have yet to form their social relationships the necessity of their being at one with each other upon all vitally important ques-

tions, if they would really be, not outwardly, but inwardly, sincerely, enduringly happy. You are not to look at physical beauty, at social position, or at personal charms, strictly in themselves considered; all these have their place, and an important place it undoubtedly is; but under all these considerations there lies the great question, *What about the heart?* Believe me, if the heart is not right, if the supreme affection be not divine, the whole life will be one continuously downward course, ending in mortification, disgust, and ruin. We know the ordinary excuse that is made when the Christian marries one who has no devotional sympathies: the generous, hopeful, self-sacrificing woman openly avows her belief that in a very little time she will be able to bring her intended husband to a right decision; she knows (poor creature!) that there is something good in him; she has heard (O mocking ear!) him say words which she construed into a noble intention on his part; she is sure all will be right by-and-by; a little patience, a little humouring, and a little instruction—then all will be right! This is the dream of her love, the inspiration of her ill-directed hope. Don't account me cruel when I denounce it as an imposition—a deceit—a lie! Let me grant, that in one case out of a thousand, events do prove better than expected; we have not to be governed by exceptions, but by principles; we must get away from the accidental to the essential; and so long as right is right, we are bound to stand by it, how painful soever, how tormenting or destructive soever, the consequences. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

The principle of the text will still further permit us to say an earnest word about evil companionship generally. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those who go down into the pit: we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot amongst us; let us all have one purse: my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood." I am not prepared to deny that amongst worldly men there may be many flattering and alluring attractions which work mightily upon the imagination and affections of the young. The devil can come to a man in many disguises. He does not always come, so to speak, as the devil pure and simple, but often brings with him a robe of light, and adapts himself to the condition,

pursuits, and tastes of his intended victim. I will not suppose that any young man who now hears me is prepared to identify himself with the public drunkard, swearer, or thief; of course, no young man is prepared to go to such lengths at once; but the point to be insisted on is this, that if the moral tone of the party seeking your companionship be not right, there must of necessity be a descent into depth after depth of moral degradation. I am aware that you will tell me of your intention to turn back when you feel that you are going too far. This is a fool's decision. You forget that every step you take on the wrong road involves on your part a loss of power to retrace your way. The man is not the same man after he has gone a mile on the devil's highway. He has lost force; he has gone down in the volume and quality of his manhood; and when he thinks that it is now time to turn round and come back, he will find that his way has been hedged up behind him, and that in all probability there is no way of escape. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." It is possible, as in the case just supposed, that some of you may be persuading yourselves that though your companions be not all that you could wish them, yet you are exerting upon them a recovering influence. I do not wish to speak discouragingly, yet I must speak warningly upon this point. I dare not say that your influence upon your companions is not for their advantage; neither dare I flatter myself by the inference that they are not exerting upon you a deep and deadly, though a remote and subtle influence. Where one good young man succeeds in recovering an evil companion, I hesitate not to say that many young men succumb to the treacherous influences which are brought to bear upon them by vicious associates. It is not necessary to be the bosom companion of a man who is evil-minded in order to save him; you are rather to stand at a distance and to speak from an elevation; you are not to descend to the same moral level with him; you may be found in his society, yet you may be separate from him, as Jesus Christ himself was "separate from sinners." Your laugh at an indecent joke may be a sanction to foul thoughts; your silence in the hearing of profane language may give some countenance to evil-speaking; your want of heroism may be regarded as an encouragement by those who have set themselves to do mischief. Even those who are related to you by nature are to be avoided, when they would invite you towards evil. There is a higher relationship than that of mere blood; even were your own father to tempt you to do that which is unrighteousness, you are to resist him, and flee from him as an enemy. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto

thee, or far off from thee from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, thou shalt not consent unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him." You see from these words, and from others that might be quoted bearing in the same direction, that the position of the Christian is to be one of the utmost distinctness. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Yes, this is the difficulty which every young Christian has to encounter at the very outset of his career, and throughout the whole of his Christian service and testimony He is not only to avoid the appearance of evil himself, but he is to lift up his voice against those who serve the devil. He is called to be a *witness* for the truth; he is to lift up his voice, and to say distinctly what is wrong and what is right, and to fight the battles of the Lord against the mighty. He is not only then to abstain from evil companionships and confederacies; much more is required. It is needful that the man should distinctly define his Christian ground, and should constantly utter a testimony against all unrighteousness, and in favour of the things that are true and pure, honest and lovely.

We have a great lesson before us this day; he that hath ears to hear, let him hear! "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Men cannot confederate themselves against God and succeed. We may imagine that by gathering ourselves together in great numbers, by taking counsel one of another, and by some system of unanimous co-operation, we may be able to set ourselves successfully against the Divine government, but God challenges the nations of the earth, and contemptuously defies them. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces: and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." I need not recall the instance in which "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech," and in which men set themselves to do great things by way of protecting their interests from supernatural interposition; you remember that they carried their tower to a certain height, and that God came down and scattered it, and confounded their speech, and made them so that they could not understand one another. He will surely do this again if we combine to oppose His way. All our commercial partnerships will be examined; all our social relationships will be subjected to inexorable judgment; all our companionships will be sifted by the Divine visitation; none shall be able to stay the wrath of God, when He comes to judge the earth by the light of His infinite and incorruptible holiness. Better stand alone than be found in the association of evil men. Better never hear a friendly voice than be allured by the deceits of evil men! Better be found in unpitied loneliness, yet with a conscience void of offence, than lift up our heads amongst the most influential and illustrious servants of the devil.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, mercifully save us from the counsels and devices of wicked men: they lie in wait to deceive us, and to turn our profession of righteousness into an instrument of evil, but Thou canst enable us to discover their intent and bring discomfiture and humiliation upon them. Save us, we humbly beseech Thee, when propositions of gain are made to us by such men as Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel. May we be saved from all morally incongruous partnerships, how profitable soever they may appear to be: help us in all such things mightily to resist the devil. Help us to feel the blessedness of bearing a distinct testimony on behalf of truth; and if we are called to suffer for it, may we surely know the enduring riches of an honourable poverty. May the meditation of the morning be turned to good account by the young who have put their trust in Thee. Help them to cut off the right hand and to pluck out the right eye rather than bring discredit upon the name of the Holy Saviour. If they have thoughtlessly entered into relations which are condemned by Thy word, give them such strength and grace as will enable them, in the right spirit and the right manner, to put away from them all evil things. May the spirit of crucifixion be magnified even to rapture and triumph in their souls, and by the power of the One blessed Cross may they beat down the forces that would work their destruction. Teach us all the divine meaning of suffering; show us that our loss is our gain, if we endure it for Christ's sake; reveal the glory that gathers around the head of every cross which is borne in the Spirit of the Son of God. O Son of God, Child of the Virgin, coming to us in a strange loneliness, yet accompanied by singing angels, teach us that all loneliness which is brought upon us by love of things pure, and noble, and lovely, will be succeeded by the blessed companionship and perfect joy of heaven. Blessed Son of the Eternal Father! as Thou wast separate from sinners, so may Thy followers be; not in Pharisaical self-love and self-honour, but in all meekness, quietness, and charity. Deepen our distaste for things that are merely earthly; refine our affections, and gather them as undivided homage offered to Thyself. Teach us as Thou wilt. Break our ships in pieces; send a whirlwind to smite the four corners of our banquetting halls; kindle a fire in our palaces; send a plague upon our flocks and a blight upon our fields; do these things, if Thou so pleasest, only save our souls, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us! Let the Father hear us, let the Son show Himself mighty on our behalf, let the Holy Ghost baptise us with fire. Amen.

The City Temple.

Report of a Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 31st, 1870.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, because Thou art full of love we are full of hope; because Thou despisest no man, therefore are we sure Thou wilt look upon us with tender regard. When there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, Thine own eye pitied, and Thine own arm brought salvation; Thou didst look, and there was no man, there was none to redeem, and behold, Thou didst come in the person of Thy Son, mighty to save, and Thou didst tread the winepress alone, and make sacrifice for sin; the Priest himself became the victim, and by the blood of Jesus Christ Thy Son we are cleansed from all iniquity. Our heart is touched when we read what Jesus did to poor, lonely, helpless men, when we hear Him speak so comfortingly and healingly and hopefully to poor lost women, and such as have no friends, our heart cries out, "My Lord and my God." Herein is love; we know it to be love, and our heart is moved towards it in loyal homage, in devout and passionate reverence, for never man spake or worked like this Man. Here are lonely ones before Thee; friendless, strangers in the crowd, alone in the thronged city; no voice speaking to them, either historically or hopefully; no eye brightening when they appear, no heart accelerated when their voice is heard; lonely and sad, as if the world did not want them; baffled, disappointed, as though they were in the way, and every soul was opposed to their welfare: may such loneliness not lead to despair, but rather excite in the heart wonderings and desires after Him who never passed a lone man or a sorrowing woman without speaking the word of hope, and drying the fountain of tears. Blessed Saviour, be our companion, and

we shall never be lonely; break our bread for us, and we shall never want; go with us through all the way of the wilderness, and we shall find manna and water every day. Jesus found us when no heart cared for us, His heart burst with love over our lost estate, and by the shedding of His blood did He open up our way to reconciliation and peace with God. We hail Him our Redeemer, and King, and Lord; we would offer Him all that our heart can conceive. We would add all the jewels of the universe to the crown which is upon His head; we would serve Him constantly with ever-increasing capacity, and ever-deepening delight. Blessed Saviour, never leave us. Come to us in the darkness, and make all things light round about us; come to us in our affliction, and interpret to us the meaning of pain, and weakness, and death; come to us in our prosperity, and give us the light which is above the brightness of the sun, and help us, remembering what we have received from Thee, to give unto Thee in return the undivided service of our thankful heart. May we tell Jew and Gentile who it was that saved us, and that found us wandering and brought us home, and may our speech be with emphasis, with all force and clearness and power, that none may be able to mistake our testimony. May Thy Church put on her strength, and speak the praises of her Lord in loud and persuasive tones; may Jerusalem put on her beautiful garments, and proclaim herself the king's daughter. Let Thy people's heart be drawn out towards the Saviour to day; may many see Him as they have never seen Him before, feel Him touching the very depths of their nature, answering the most tormenting problems of their life, and shedding upon them the only light which pierces the grave, and touches the land beyond. As for the thoughtless and the vain, those who are their own idols and their own gods, if it be possible, let Thy grace touch and recover them. They have contemptuously treated eighteen hundred years of Christian history; they have set Thy book at naught; they have practically given the lie to Thy ministry, and to Thy Church, and they have openly served the devil, and secretly offered incense on forbidden altars. If it be yet possible, ere the sun set, that such rocks should be broken into penitential tears, Lord, let it be so even now. We ask it all in the name of Jesus, without which all other names would have no meaning and no blessing for us. Amen.

The Sermon.

ON LONELINESS.

"I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming another steppeth down before me.—JOHN v. 7.

A HUMAN being reduced to a state of helplessness! Take a man at his full estate, when his system is healthy, when his word is law to those who are about him, when a call will bring servants and friends, and one would regard it as impossible that such a man would be reduced to the state of helplessness described in the text. Yet look at the impoverishing and withering process. First of all, there is a blight upon his business, and his thousands are reduced to hundreds; then the great house is given up, and the proud head stoops under the humble roof. Presently, affliction strikes down wife and child, and the air becomes too cold even for the oldest friend. The next blow is at the man's own health; paralysis withers the limbs once so strong, and the hand which was once the sign of authority droops in pitiful weakness; the voice has now no meaning in it to anybody, its law and force are forgotten. There lies the man in pain, in weakness, quite alone, uncared for, lover and friend gone, and no counsellor at hand. There are hundreds of such men to be found in England to-day; or if there be any difference in the literal circumstances, there may be other considerations which still more deeply embitter the lot of wretchedness. A man without a man! a man left quite to himself. Such is the man in the text; he is alone in the crowd; the eye sees him, but has no pity for him; his unavailing struggles only add torture to his pain.

There is really a good deal of this kind of thing in society, a good deal of loneliness, helplessness, unsuccessful effort, and blighted hope. Oh, those unsuccessful efforts, how they tear the heart right open, or heap upon it burdens which are too heavy! The bravest will is battered down by them. A resolute and good-hearted girl, reading what some great women have done with their pens, sets secretly to work upon poem or song, the price of which is to give her a measure of independence, or is to relieve the pressure upon other members of the family; she writes till her ill-afforded candle expires, and writes again in the greyest light of the cold morning; the lines please her, her fancy sees many a beauty in them, and the aching of her heart pauses under the exhilaration of a proud and thankful hope. Then comes the day of trembling expectation; the manuscript is in the hands of a publisher, and all depends upon his

criticism ; the mornings come very slowly ; she can hardly sleep, and, when she does sleep, her dreams are of her book. At last the answer comes ; she hastens to some secret place to read it, and the scalding tears blind her when she reads that her manuscript is "declined with thanks ;" while she was coming, another stepped down before her. At that moment, the sun cannot give her light : she feels a strange darkness settling over her whole life. In various ways, we have had similar experiences. There are young men before me who have traversed our city streets,

> "Begging a brother of the earth
> To give them leave to toil,"

until they have fainted with weariness and hunger ; mile on mile they have wandered, till they thought all men had conspired to slay them, and all the natural brightness of young life had died away ; at last they feel ashamed of being seen. They have feared to meet any one who would ask them of their success, for they had nothing but the old chilling answer. A poor creature came to me the other day with a tale of bitterness. She had come to London to seek employment, but nothing came of all her labour. She seemed always to be too soon or too late ; at all events, no door opened to admit her even to a chance of getting her daily bread. She said, "I have walked the streets for two nights, and where to go to I really don't know." There was no professional tone in her voice ; she was not a trained beggar—she was an honest, but poor and suffering creature, who gave a straightforward and veritable account of herself, which I had every means of testing. Lonely—oh, so lonely—yet within sight of the healing pools ! Most of us know what this means, for some form or other of the unhappy experience has befallen us in the working out of our life. We sometimes make merry with recollections of this sort now that we are strong, yet the gash upon the young heart is not quite overgrown ; we can still find it, and happy are we when our very failures have disclosed to us the purposes of love which God was working out. Those failures strained us much at the time ; they went far towards souring our temper for ever, but we were saved from that ill fate.

We have come to see how long waiting at the edge of the pool has wrought in us a lingering and hopeful patience towards other sufferers, and we have learned to be more clement in our judgment of those whose eager haste for self-recovery made them apparently cruel to feebler men. Many a time, just when we were upon the point of success, a rival has overmatched us, and left us to suffer and pine by the pool-side.

This reminds us, that according to the text there is not only much helplessness, but much selfishness in the world. Every man has a case of

his own, which is right enough; the point of selfishness is, that many men having been cured, have forgotten that their cure binds them in God's law of love to see that other sufferers are aided in their attempts at recovery. Of all who had been cured at the pool not one remained to give this man the benefit of his strength. What a world this would be without social beneficence—that is, without one man finding joy in helping another! Selfishness makes the world a very little place; a very cold, fruitless, gloomy corner. It may appear to be a very grand thing to write one's own name everywhere as owner and lord, but if the name be not written on recovered and thankful human hearts, it will soon be rubbed out and forgotten. Love is the only ink which does not fade; love is the only memory which strengthens with time; love is the bond which never corrodes. We have only so much as we have given; by so much as we have helped other people we have laid up reserves of strength which will give us mastery and honour in time to come. I am thankful to be addressing a benevolent people, and I gladly bear record how many poor sufferers some of you have helped to the healing pool; their names are all written, and so are yours, and there is coming a day of very glad memory. You have had part of the compensation already, and you know how sweet it is. When you have taken a child off the streets, and given it food and clothing, and shelter from the harsh wind, you did not want gold and silver as a reward. God put it into your hearts instantly, as if in haste to show His approval, such a warmth of holy gladness as lifted you quite out of common worldly influences, and you wished you could be always giving. It will be a joy to my heart for ever that, as a boy, I was seldom allowed to sit down to my own Sunday dinner until I carried a portion to some sick man or poor woman; and that walk upon mercy's errand gave us all greater enjoyment of what was left, doubled it, made it sweeter to the taste, for it seemed as if Jesus Himself broke the bread. No doubt it is a selfish world, yet, on the other hand, there is a good deal of genuine kindness among men, and it is well to think of this. There is very much benevolence among the rich, and there is also very much benevolence among the poor; to the poor many cups of cold water are given, and many a mite is secretly put into the empty hand. As a general rule the complaining man is not the most deserving man, nor is destitution always to be measured by outward signs of distress; there are some who cover their sorrow with laughter, and talk so hopefully that they are never suspected of want. And, on the other hand, there is a way of doing a kindness which looks as if no kindness had been done, a gentle and delicate way which adds preciousness to the gift. I have known some men do a kindness as if they were receiving it rather than giving it, so that the poor were

not made to feel their poverty. This was Jesus Christ's method, and it will be ours as we approach His likeness. We need not look long for opportunities of helping suffering men into the pool of healing; every day is rich with such opportunities to the man whose eyes combine with the penetration of shrewdness the benignity of compassion.

This reminds us that Jesus Christ ever, as in the text, went about doing good; not waiting for the lost, but seeking them; not standing still, but going after it until it was found. Sometimes Jesus Christ's help was besought, sometimes it was offered, but whether this way or that, Jesus Christ spent no idle hours. The stream of His most merciful help poured from an inexhaustible fountain, and no poor, broken-hearted suppliant was ever excluded from the healing waters. This case illustrates His compassionate method. To whom does He address Himself? To the loneliest and most helpless of men! Truly might that man say, "When there was no eye to pity, and when there was no arm to save, Thine own eye pitied, and Thine own arm brought salvation." The same field of philanthropic service lies before us all; what if we should all resolve that every day we should make a point of assisting one man towards the pool of healing? A boy said some time since, as he was writing in a diary which the fancy of a moment had led him to buy, "Keeping a diary might change a man's life;" and when we asked him how it could do so, he replied, "Because at night, when he came to write in it, he would say to himself, What have I done to-day? And if he hadn't done anything, he might go out and do something." It was a child's notion, but there is a man's wisdom in it. We may not keep diaries, but a diary is kept for each of us, and day by day entry is made according to our industry or idleness. How many blanks are there in the diary! Are there many entries of healing or few? The Christian method of service compels men to go out and seek opportunities of doing good; and to every man Jesus Christ says, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren;" being healed thyself, help others to the place of recovery. It is an infallible sign that a man has not undergone Christian healing if he have no care about healing others; it is only an external cure, some poor patch-work of morality which fear of the law may have wrought upon him, not the divinely vitalised energy which warms and stirs the heart with all the impulses of far-reaching charity. The philanthropy of morality goes at the biding of conscience, but the philanthropy of the Cross goes at the bidding of love. You know the difference of the two biddings? Conscience never yet developed a grand nature; it has striven with much urgent importunity and many a pricking smart to

keep men erect and honest, but it has never wrought in them any overflow of good nature, and fruitfulness of generous service. Christianity never lulls the conscience, yet never seems to expect much from it; its chief hope is in Christianised human love. Conscience has but a limited sway; love has empire over the whole man. Conscience will use its plumb and square, and with sharp-pointed compasses will describe the range of duty, but love will wreathe every straight line with flowers, and to the majesty of rectitude will add all the graces and delights of beauty. Conscience is as the watchman who travels round his beat at night time; enough for him that gates and doors are closed, and that bolts and bars are all in their places; but love is as the friend who watches by the sleepless pillow of sickness, and with many a kind touch smoothes the hard way of the sufferer. Through all Christian service the same principle holds good; conscience may tell a man what to do, but by an almost omnipotent constraint love makes him do it. You will find love at the pool-side, offering to help the poorest sufferer step into the healing water; and long after conscience is satisfied love will add something to a day's work, which has far exceeded the twelve hours of the hireling. Oh! those wretched calculating hirelings, who pinch their work up to the point of dishonesty! The men who make nothing but technical rules cannot be honest out-and-out; and they will never make life very successful.

People who are so clever at making rules for saving themselves, generally, and most deservedly, make fools of themselves by their very cleverness. No; throughout life, in religion, business, government, and everything else, we cannot shut up human service within rules and bye-laws; there must be grace above law, else alas for the poor lone man who has no one to help him to the pool!

This brings me to say that the lost man's hope is in Jesus Christ. He who saves the sufferer at Bethesda must save all other dying men. It is the glory of Jesus Christ that He saves when others give up in despair. He seeks the *lost*. When a man feels that the last human hope has gone out, and left his sky without streak or glimmer of light, Jesus Christ will come through all the darkness, and make it glow with the brightness of morning. But not till then. So long as man puts his hope in men, Jesus Christ stands off; but as soon as the dying eye turns towards Him all His heart opens in one great offering of life. This is the Gospel which we have to preach; can you wonder that now and again we are carried away in a perfect ecstasy of joy? We have felt the sad loneliness and helplessness of sin, and none can tell what gladness was wrought in our hearts when Jesus Christ first spoke to us. There was a tone in His voice which was wanting in all others, a persuasive kindness which quite won us back to hope. Men could not help us; but this Man said

he could find for us the piece that was lost, and could add all heaven to it. We remember how glad His Word made us, how we rose, and walked, and leaped, and entered into the temple, praising Him with a loud voice; and as the memory comes back, we can hardly keep down the song of love and blessing. It is this memory that will give us thorough congregational singing. When the heart is cold, when the old loving memories have died out of it, and we come up to the house of God merely in the performance of a decent ceremony, no wonder that we drone and mumble lest persons in the next pew should hear us. Such singing is horribly unnatural: it amounts to insult when regarded as an offering to God. But when the heart is alive, when we recollect what Jesus has done for us, when love tunes our lips, then we could drown the storms of the sea with our rapturous yet chastened and harmonious praise. There is no praise like that which is given to Jesus Christ; it comes from the innermost chords of the heart, and is lifted up by grateful, immortal love. Think what joy will fill that crushed and suffering heart of His when all whom He saved shall be gathered into one vast company! Innumerable throng! Every man of the infinite host having his own special reason for heightening the sublime ecstatic melody. Surely in that hour all the horrors of Gethsemane, and all the anguish of Calvary will be forgotten in the splendour and security of a perfected redemption.

So our text has two sides—one dark, the other bright. On the one side we see what sin would bring us to, what loneliness, helplessness, and extremity of suffering; on the other we see whence comes the light of hope and the hand of unfailing power. As the poor man at Bethesda was anxious for salvation, as Jesus spoke to that poor man, so He speaks to every one of us; and now is the solemn hour in which we may return answer to Christ's entreating love. Now are we without excuse. Jesus himself will testify against us if we complain of helplessness. His arm is our arm; his resources are ours; his divinity is our sun and shield. Don't throw from you this word of *hope;* hide it in your troubled hearts; listen to it when the world is gloomy and silent, and even though cast down you shall be saved by the One Saviour of helpless men. I charge you to hope in Christ!

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 7th, 1870.

ON POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE.

"Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance."—2 Peter i. 15.

The voice is the voice of a veteran. There is none of the silver of youthful music in it. It is round, rich, ripe, mellow; the very tones seem (if the suggestion may be allowed) to have upon them the russet of advanced autumn. There is history in this voice. Gone years, with their manifold and affluent experiences, their struggles against Satanic force, and their triumphs through Divine strength, repeat themselves in this rugged and penetrating eloquence. In this respect, then, ours is a high privilege. The young man, in the passion incident to inexperience, says, not without a dash of irreverence and flippancy, that he can soon run up the gamut of an old man's sober strain. Not so with the veteran before us. Some persons are born old; they are withered and desiccated from the womb. Others are ever young; winter snows their head, but sends no breath of frost to their warm blood; they go back to God beautiful in renewed youth, strong in increasing power. Such a man was the writer of this text. His heart beat like a hero's; the fire of enthusiasm shone in his eye. Bravely, with a conqueror's port, he says, "*I will endeavour.*" That word "endeavour" charms and inspires me. It is beautiful in humility; it is majestic in strength; it combines calmness and resolution; it is a child's word, and yet a king's. The old man is not content with what he *has* done; valorously he says he will try to do *more*. There is none of the natural indolence too often incident to old age; there is no moan, no wail, no sigh. Though between him and his death there is only a "shortly," as "the Lord Jesus hath showed" him, yet he says "I will endeavour; I will contrive; I will put both hands out; nothing shall be wanting on my part; I will work

down to the very last moment of my life, that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance."

Such are the circumstances; what is the subject? The subject is posthumous influence—man conquering death, mind ruling when the exhausted flesh is perishing in a forgotten grave.

1. In calling attention to this multitudinous theme—multitudinous in its principles and applications—I have to affirm, first of all, that a sublime influence after death is the result of a sublimely conducted life. The earnest "endeavour" is the cause of the effective "remembrance." Many covet the influence who are impatient of the long and disciplinary "endeavour." The two must for ever be united. Can the *pauper* bequeath large estates to posterity? Can the man whose brain has been permitted to lie like an uncultivated waste rule the thinking, or mould the course of generations yet to be born? You have no answer but a scornful *No*, and your answer is right. Learn, then, that the interpretation of after-death influence is to be found in the range and tone of the all-determining life.

What "things" are they which the Apostle is anxious to have kept in perpetual memory? Were they the dreams of a distempered fancy, the transient experiences of his dying conflict? If you cast your eye over the context, you will observe how frequently the Apostle employs the words "*these things.*" For example, in verse 8, he says, "For if '*these things*' be in you;' in verse 9, "But he that lacketh '*these things*' is blind;" verse 10, "For if ye do '*these things*,' ye shall never fail;" verse 12, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of '*these things;*'" and finally in the text, "That ye may have '*these things*' always in remembrance." Of what "things" does the fervent and heroic writer testify? In the beginning of his letter, the Apostle intimates that the great end of the Christian economy is to make us "*partakers of the Divine nature;*" every believer is to have in him all of God that his capacity can contain. God in his intellect, presiding over all the efforts of his mental life; God in his heart, directing all the issues of his moral being; God in his conduct, sanctifying all his social relations. That is the sovereign object for which, through "Divine power," we are "called to glory and virtue." The work of sanctification must go on until the saint can say, "I and my Father are one." That is the sublime end of Christianity. It is not to multiply theological technicalities; it is not to build one church spire higher than another; it is not to furnish a grindstone on which pugnacious bigots may whet their little swords; it is to gather up a shattered and overthrown humanity, to re-burnish the living stones on which the fire of an enemy has left traces of fury, to rebuild the fallen empire of manhood, until it shall be beautiful and holy as a palace built for God.

The Apostle having begun, here proceeds to show that "diligence" is

necessary to the full working out of the Christian life. He uses a word that cannot easily be forgotten. He says that our simple duty is to ADD! Can we forget *that?* The ripest scholar amongst us is not beyond that "add." We are to add the graces one to another, until "charity" glitters above them all as a crowning star. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness *charity:* there is no higher height in heaven; it reaches the heart of God. After this injunction there comes a remark full of significance. I specially call the eye of young men to this ninth verse, "He that lacketh these things is *blind*, and cannot see afar off." This is an interpretation of *blindness* which is often overlooked. *All bad men are blind.* The true vision is *moral.* Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see—"see" what? "See" all great visions in one—"they shall see *God.*" Call him blind who can see only with his physical eyes. Love knoweth the deepest interpretations. The clear eye of purity can read off the writing on the world's wall, when the bloodshot eye of the blaspheming bacchanal can see but enough to make his bones shake with avenging agony. Grace is genius. There is a graceless, godless, atheistic thing called genius, but I call it insanity; the light of its eye is not the light of heaven, but the flare of an unholy and unconsecrated fire. God hath "hidden" certain things from the "wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes;" He has left the wise shivering outside the guardian wall, and taken the "babes" with Him to behold the growths of the paradise that never can be lost.

The Apostle having given this view of the Christian life, turns to his personal experience. All old men like to talk about themselves. They are their own library. Their recollections, like the sea-shells, have in them the boom of the ocean, and in that boom they hear messages from the venerable past. Let the old man talk. His tones fascinate himself, at least, and he has a right to the harmless entrancement. Peter says, "I will not be negligent," "I will stir you up," "I will endeavour." His eye brightens, and in his voice there is a quiver of emotion; he sees the heavenly port; he feels that he is breaking up fellowship with this tabernacle; he descries the glory-crowned Beulah; he hears the play of the wave as it breaks on the sinless shore; and then speaks with rapture of an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I have thus turned to the context, because it gives us a view of the life which the Apostle had been living, and which he intended to conclude upon earth by an "endeavour" to perpetuate its principles through all time. The Apostle has revealed the root-forces of his being. He has shown us the sources of his vitality, and given to us the secret of his sovereignty over all-deposing death. The lesson is clear, that he who would be useful to posterity must be useful to his contem-

poraries. He who would conquer death, and be a minister of God to all coming generations, must live the symmetrical and comprehensive life here sketched by the Apostle's dying hand. Sublime life and sublime influence are cause and effect. If we are careful about the life, the influence need not excite our anxiety. It is ours to plant, and ours to water; and the increase in this, as in everything else, is with God. Do we not often limit the application of that passage? Do we not lock it up in the church, and confine it to moral service alone? Why, sirs, it is as true in intellectual cultivation as it is in preaching the gospel. It is as true in the farmer's field as in the preacher's pulpit. The finite never can do more than plant and water, and all increase—the increase of flower, or forest, or thought, or virtue—is necessarily with the Infinite. Let us do these things, and our influence shall be immortal.

History, however, compels us to turn aside, and offer an explanation. When it is affirmed that sublime life and sublime influence are cause and effect, it should be added that the influence is occasionally of tardy growth. Sometimes a man cannot be read by his own age. The prophet lives in the future. He cannot be comprehended by the soothsayers, the magicians, and the monthly prognosticators. Some will say that he is Elias, and others one of the old prophets. All kinds of speculation will be suggested. As in an oil painting, those who come too near will see nothing but thick flakes of paint. But his day will surely come. The darkness may be long in comprehending the light; but the light will certainly prevail. The wise word may be long in winning a fit audience, but its hope is in its ages. The profound book may remain sealed, but some of the kindred of the lion of the tribe of Judah will arise and open the volume, and interpret it to a wondering and admiring world. Persevere. Quit you like men. Say again and again, with a hero's hope, "I will endeavour," and, verily, you shall take your sacred place among

> "The dead but sceptred monarchs who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

2. The fact that life is the cause of influence, that life is attended with results that are imperishable, greatly enhances the dignity and responsibility of living. "No man liveth unto himself." A man's audience, as has just been hinted, may be small to-day, but if he has a *living* word to utter, his congregation will increase with the ages. Is MILTON dead? Is BUNYAN clean gone for ever? Is PASCAL'S memory like a vanished star? Milton never sang to so large an assembly as he sings to to-day. Bunyan is, so to speak, more alive to-day than when he dreamed the world's happiest dream; he had life *then*, but he has "life more abundantly now." The true man does not work for one generation alone. Every true thought is a globe of light, which shall never cease to shine in the world's brightening firmament. Passing all

computation is the reward of the great thinker or the illustrious servant. His compensation is an ever-recurring circle; literally, it never ceases; the cup of water always comes back changed into wine. God has never done putting crowns upon the head of the faithful.

Still we are to take the element of *time* into consideration. God does not measure by our chronometers. This is incidentally and beautifully brought out by our Lord in conversation with His brethren, when they wished Him to go up to the feast of tabernacles. They were ambitious, impatient, unbelieving men. A man is often impeded and misunderstood even by his own kinsfolk. So it was with Jesus on the occasion referred to. They urged Him to go into Judea, to get nearer and nearer the great metropolitan centre, and to display His mighty works on the widest platform. This impatience elicited from Jesus a most profound and instructive reply. It was a reply terribly severe, too. He uttered it without fury of tone, but it might have consumed the most brazen cheek. It is wonderful how terrible a thing may be said in a whisper. When those brethren were all pressing Him with petulant importunity to take a bolder position in society, He made this quiet but most blanching reply, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready." The fungus grows and perishes within the compass of a few hours; but the oak is the growth of centuries. The great truth set forth in Christ's reply seems to be, that in proportion to the width, and volume, and weight of character, and in proportion to the duration and splendour of destiny, is the time required for a man's full unfoldment and consolidation. The *rocket* splutters out all its empty secrets at once; the *stars* have not told all their story yet. We must not measure all men by the same rule. One man comes to his full estate in a single day, as it were; another must do cures to-day and to-morrow, and not until the third day is he perfected.

I have spoken of the reward of the great thinker and illustrious servant; let me add, that what is true in the loftier realms of thought is also true in the humbler spheres of service. The law of the oak is the law of the daisy. All character leaves more or less of influence behind it. Is that child of yours dead, that years ago, with a bursting heart you laid under the sod? As long as you carry her fair face in your eye's picture-book—as long as her charming prattle is memoried in your faithful ear—as long as you thrill under a well-remembered touch of her soft little hand—so long the child is not dead, but sleepeth. Is your companion dead with whom you were wont to take sweet counsel? You hid no secrets from each other. In the new-born light and in the deepening shade you walked together, talked together, exchanged speculations, and compared experiences. The one was the complement of the other. And now that you know him no longer after the flesh, is he therefore dead? Verily, no. So thoroughly were you one in all your

higher instincts and aspirations, that even now you feel as though you could consult him; even now he—

> "Comes to your side in the twilight dim,
> When the spirit's eye only sees."

Even now, with mystic mien and hallowing voice, he takes part in the counsels of your life.

It has just been affirmed that posthumous influence invests life with enhanced dignity. While Bunyan lived he was but as a mustard-seed; now he is as a great cathedral tree, in which ten thousand voices are lifted up in laudatory and grateful song! "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." No living man is complete. While your heart beats you are undergoing a process. Time will mellow you; age will tone your character. Do not urge society to give you a verdict just now. Society is too heated and confused to pronounce upon you with the accuracy of deliberation and the dignity of repose. Death will befriend you. A most solemn and righteous estimation of character is often introduced by death. The green hillock in the yard of the dead is a judgment-seat which might appal an unjust judge. Your appeal, then, under all misapprehension and misrepresentation, must be to the new hours which Time has yet to strike from her bell, and which shall chime out many a reversal of condemnation, and many a fulfilment of expectation long deferred. We who believe that the wheel of retribution never pauses, that death does but give us new aspects of life, that there is a higher empire than the flesh, that the absolute and final adjudication is yet to supervene, should carry ourselves with the patience, the calmness, the dignity of men who cannot die! *To-day* is not the measure of our brief eternity; there is a to-morrow coming—coming from the heart of God—coming from the clime of light—coming with justice in its hand and mercy on its lip; and to that better day we must commit our cause. The good can afford to be patient. The true can wait until the battering shower is over. The storm can extinguish man's rushlights, but the orbs of God burn on far beyond the storm's dark wing.

I spoke of responsibility as well as dignity, arising from the fact that influence survives our personal presence in society. Opinions have come down to us from the earliest ages, and are to-day ranked among the most influential of national or social forces. Take the one case of the family. The old man quotes what his venerated mother said when he was quite a child, and the mother's word is to him more powerful than all the statutes of learned parliaments. You have seen a man's face break into smiles when he called up words which moulded and directed his infancy. The voice that uttered them is employed in other spheres, far off in the higher light that we have come to know by the sweet name of

heaven; but the thoughts which they embody are comforting angels, that will tarry with us till the dark horizon blushes with the purple of a better day.

The point to be remembered is this:—*our personal absence does not terminate our influence upon earth.* We are setting in motion a train of influences that shall outrun the wheels of the world, and be but commencing when those wheels take fire and cease their revolutions for ever. Tremendous is the responsibility of those who have to operate upon unformed and unsettled mind. The writing which you parents write can never be obliterated. Even circumstances to which you attach little or no importance haunt the memory. The frown, the smile, the gentle word, the harsh rebuff, are not to be forgotten! A terrible thing it is to live! Sirs, *dying* is nothing! *Beasts* die. *Living* is everything! On every side the invisible is pressing upon us. The lifting of a hand sends a shudder to the stars! The falling of a tear is heard in the depths of the Infinite! We little know how sensitive is the universe. Wherever I put the tip of my finger I touch the hem of the King's garment. The stones need but a word from heaven to cause them to stand up as children of Abraham. What, then, shall be said of the *moral* universe? Experiences, ideas, emotions run on from age to age, and thus *to-day* bears the uncounted riches of all expired time. To live once is to live for ever. The feeblest pulse in the obscurest circle flutters and thrills on in its influences when faded worlds expire, and shattered empires go down in death.

3. Every man who in vital sympathy with Jesus Christ rejoices in the consciousness that he is working for posterity. Here and there, on life's thronged highway, we have seen little tattered banners set up, bearing this inscription:—"I must take care of myself, and posterity may do as well as it can." This has the semblance of a profoundly wise economy. It is declared to be a fine specimen of the development of individuality. Let fire fall on it! Let the angry earth rend and swallow it up! Let it swiftly fall into the pit! My answer is ready for every man who will stand up and openly declare that his Christianity has never led him to make any humble or sublime "endeavour" on behalf of others. If any man will say, after having bowed his knee at Bethlehem, and studied the mystery of blood in Gethsemane, and interpreted the signification of Calvary's dread work, that his heart is driven in upon itself, without any yearning of affection towards others—even towards the unborn—my answer is at hand: standing before God's altar, feeling upon me mightily the power of a Divine consecration, marking the precious blood which flowed for the world's guilt, a guilt beyond the world's comprehending—standing there, not as an irate priest, but as outraged man, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I excommunicate the wretch!

Will those moral lunatics, who are so selfishly devoted to their own immediate interests, reflect how much they themselves were indebted to their forerunners? Do they sufficiently consider that they themselves were *not born into an unfurnished house?* Who built the temples, fabricated the machinery, patronised the discoveries, wrote the literature, which make up the world's great bulk? How came we into possession of riches so vast, so golden? Who opened the thousand fountains, whose living waters turn the very desert into a fruitful field? How such things tell of ancestry! How they bind us to the past! How they multiply our obligations! It clearly comes to this, that every man of us is *born deeply in debt.* Have we paid the poets that have sung to us? Have we paid the mechanicians who have shown us that knowledge is power? Have we paid the mariners who have found out a highway over the billows? Have we paid the authors who have turned our solitude into society? Every one of us is deeply in debt. The Past is our patient and gracious creditor, and our obligations can only be paid to the Future.

The argument which I wish to build upon the fact is this,—that as we cannot pay the mighty men who have covered the past with immortal renown, and who have laid us deeply in debt to their genius, their piety, their benevolence, we can only show our gratitude by noble "endeavours" to imitate their example. Our thunders of applause are nothing to those whose bodies moulder in the chambers of the dead, and whose spirits now worship in the upper light. We may stamp with tremendous approbation upon their graves, but the ear has done with hearing; we may roar our vain applause to the streaming winds, but heaven opens not to let the unavailing thunder pass. No! let us serve the living, and through them the coming ages. We may all do this. Some can throw open kingdoms of thought, others can carry the prophet's mantle; some can head the advancing army, others can lift up the wounded and weary. Blessed is that servant who is found waiting! We do not work alone. Down through the roaring and pitiless tempest comes this word of strength, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Into the dark cave into which despair has sometimes driven us comes the same word of power. If we falter for one moment, it is that we may spring forward with increased energy the next. We are not to see the results of all that we do. It is enough that no true word can return void to the speaker. Utter the Lord's cry to the sons of men; put in the roots; scatter the seed; do all things written in the Divine law of human life; and one day the eternal summer shall set in, and all memories shall be absorbed in the one recollection, that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 14th, 1870.

THE HANDS OF GOD BETTER THAN THE HANDS OF MEN.

"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let me now fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great are His mercies, but let me not fall into the hand of man."—1 Chron. xxi. 13.

David was tempted to number the people of Israel. He said unto Joab and to the rulers of the people, "Go, number Israel, from Beersheba even unto Dan, and bring the number of them to me that I may know it." Joab was a wise counsellor; in this case the wisdom was with the subject, not with the king. Joab answered, "The Lord make His people a hundred times so many as they be, but my lord the king are they not all my lord's servants? Why, then, doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?" The protest was disregarded. When kings are mad, who can stand before them?—mad, not intellectually, but morally; the madness of the heart, compared with which mental lunacy is an unspeakable blessing. There are times when the soul seems to be given over to the power of the devil, when it is caught on every side, when religion itself becomes little better than a temptation to sin. Men are sometimes brought to suppose that they are doing things for the glory of God when in reality they are but heightening the crumbling pedestal on which their own little dignity is to be shown. David might have said to himself, I will see how many fighting men there are in Israel that can be brought up to the Lord's cause in the day of battle; I have no wish to magnify my own strength, or to put a fictitious value upon my own position; in fact, I am not concerned about myself at all in this matter, my only object is to see how many qualified men might be called up to the help of the Lord in the day of battle. In saying all this David might assure himself that he was deeply concerned only for the Lord's name and glory, and that nothing could be more unselfish than his godly concern for the welfare of Israel. There are what may be called subtle sins, as well as vulgar sins. A man may set himself in open opposition to God, and boldly say that he means to fight down the divine supremacy, and put a mark of dishonour on God's

throne; he may be mad enough and vulgar enough for that; he may make a blustering and impotent idiot of himself, and defeat his own intentions by his exaggeration. I do not pause to argue any case with this man, for he is not the kind of character that does much evil in society; his very fury is its own best check. The drunkard who is rolling in the ditch is rather a warning than a temptation to other people. The thing to be noted is, that there are subtle sins—sins which do not look like sins; sins that are done up in beautiful parcels, that have an inviting aspect, that come to men altogether in false guises, and take men unawares. There is a possibility of doing things that look well, and yet are bad, of encouraging ambitions, and strengthening tastes which, under a passable reputation, are eating away the substance and strength of our best life. It will be a mistake on our part to imagine that David exhausted the sin of counting, and that now arithmetical calculations may be made without trespassing upon the province and honour of God. It is easy for us to rise in petulant indignation against David, and to declare that he ought not to have counted his men; but let us beware, lest in so doing we provoke the spirit of David to retort that it is possible for us to count our money so as to disclose the very motive and intention which on his part we condemn as vicious. Yes, there is an atheistical way of counting money. A man may go over coin by coin of his property, and look at it in a way which, being interpreted, signifies—this is my strength, this is my confidence, so long as I have all these coins it is impossible that I can get far wrong, or know much trouble; these will be my answer and defence in the day of accusation and adversity! The most harmless looking things may be done in a distrustful and self-considering spirit. David was undoubtedly giving way to low considerations; he was trying an arm of flesh; he was encouraging himself by a review of forces which he imagined to be invincible. God, who is jealous for the honour of His servants, and jealous for the honour of His own name, sent Gad, David's own seer, to put three propositions before the king: "Choose thou either three years of famine, or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel." To these propositions David answered, "I am in a great strait; let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are His mercies, but let me not fall into the hand of man." I propose to regard this answer as showing that in the saddest experiences of the heart, in the extremities of human guilt, in the allotment of penalties, and in the working out of law, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hands of men; that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.

The doctrine before us is, that as sinners, as sinners before God, and as sinners towards each other, our highest hope is not in the incomplete and perverted mercy of man, but in the infinite mercy which is founded upon the infinite righteousness of God. We may, perhaps, help ourselves towards a clearer understanding of this doctrine by first considering that it is better to fall into the hands of the highest class of men than into the hands of the lowest; if this be made clear, it will give us a hint of how much better it may be to receive sentence from God than from the highest human authorities.

Take a debated legal case. In the first instance it may be brought before the local magistracy; but, very possibly, the result may be considered unsatisfactory by one party or the other, hence the case may be moved to the court above; there again dissatisfaction may be the result, and an appeal may be carried to the highest court in the land. The decision of that court carries with it the advantage that at all events nothing further can be done—all that legal learning, acumen, skill, and experience can do, has been done. The result, even then, may not be satisfactory; still, by so much as the case has been carried to the highest tribunal, and pronounced upon by the highest wisdom, there is strong ground to rest upon. Not only so, there is a point beyond this; for by so much as the man wishes that there were a higher court still to which an appeal might be made, does he show how deeply graven upon the heart is the law, that it is better to fall into the hands of the highest than into the hands of the lowest; that it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. It is quite true that the decision of the highest may not bring with it satisfaction to the mind; that is not the point before us; the one point is, that men do aspire to have their cases determined, not by the lowest, but by the highest authorities in the land, and it is only by so much as they are persuaded that they have had access to those highest authorities, that they approach anything like a condition of rest and satisfaction.

What is true in the law is equally true in all criticism. Take an amateur painter: as his work approaches completion, he permits his friends to look at it. His father declares himself lost in wonder; his mother unhesitatingly says that the work of her son is perfect; his kinsfolk generally admit that there is genius in the family. So much for one class of critics; but, inasmuch as the artist is aware that this is the very lowest class, it is impossible for him to be satisfied even with the most flattering commendation of his skill. Next come other competitors for fame; and they, as becometh incipient greatness, look on critically and coldly; and the amateur consoles himself under their censure, by finding in envious rivalry a full explanation of their reserve. Is the artist satisfied with the opinions which have been pronounced upon his work? Does he consider himself favoured of fortune, because his father and his mother have, without modification, accorded to him the tribute of

their favour? Or does he consider himself condemned to neglect and forgetfulness, because men who are in the same position as himself have treated his work with coldness? He says, alike to the flattery and the censure, I have yet to be judged by the Academicians; *you* are not the judges; *they* will say what the work is worth; by their word I abide. I cannot accept your flattery; I cannot be discouraged by your censure. I must appeal to the highest, and by the highest I stand or fall. Even supposing the judgment of the highest to be unfavourable, the painter knows that, morally, it is impartial, and, artistically, it is supreme; and by so much he is set at rest as to the value of his work. But suppose that all preliminary criticism is favourable, the wise artist will yet say, I must not rest content with this, it has not the full consent of my own mind; these people are not able to judge my work by the right standards. The great judgment has yet to be pronounced; all that has been said may be confirmed or reversed, and not until the appointed authorities have expressed their opinion can I feel at rest.

Take the case of the young public speaker. It will be for the advantage of such a man to be judged by the best speakers which the country can supply. Do not let his audience consist of half-educated men, but fill the house in which he is to speak with the highest talent of the land. Even then, should the young man fail in his effort, there will be in his hearers a discrimination that can find out any sign or trace of power that may be discovered in his service, there will be an honourable treatment of his failings; and everything that he does that looks in the direction of power will be viewed with hopefulness and encouraged with stimulating words. It is better to be judged by the highest than by the lowest; men have less to fear when they act or speak in the presence of the noblest minds than when they are criticised and judged by men of inferior sagacity and culture. Constantly in life we are seeing the conflict of opinions, and waiting for the expression of the highest, and when the highest has been ascertained, society settles down into contentment and rest. On the other hand, until the highest has been made known, men cannot be quite at ease; the vexed question is still beset with perilous possibilities, and no man is foolhardy enough to build upon it with confidence and satisfaction.

Now, in carrying these illustrations into the religious realm, we must distinguish between the principle and the accident. There is of course infinite disparity between God and the highest human authorities; those authorities are not infallible, even upon matters which come within the scope of their proper functions; judges may err in law; academicians may err in art; physicians may err in medicine;—the one thing to be remembered is, that by so much as men are sure that they have appealed to the highest accessible tribunal, are they satisfied with the decision. We come then to the one great question of *sin*. How is sin to be met? How is sin to be forgiven? That sin must somehow be recognised and

punished is made abundantly clear by all the arrangements of society. By common consent it has been determined to hunt down sin that affects our social relations ; how is the great sin which affects the heart and disturbs our attitude towards God to be met ? We may seek to punish one another, or to heal one another, but our punishments are mockeries, and our healings do not touch the disease. You may scourge a felon, but he is a felon still. When you have shut up the manslayer for life in the gloomiest solitude, you have not touched *the spirit of murder* that is in him. When we have sought to modify sin, to show that corruption is not so corrupt, and that there are spots of light even in the densest moral darkness, we have not really healed the heart which we have addressed in such vain words, we have only put over it a thin covering of lies which will be consumed ; and the heart will be the worse for the delusion to which it has yielded. All human punishment is but negative. Human punishment is in fact simply a protest.

Why is it better that the sinner should fall into the hands of God rather than into the hands of men ? In reply to this question, good use might be made of the many pleasing considerations which arise in connection with God's wisdom, God's righteousness, and God's perfect knowledge of facts ; but I shall include all these in a higher answer—viz., it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hands of men, *because in His whole treatment of human sin God is constantly seeking, not the destruction, but the salvation of the sinner.* The punishment which follows sin is not mere punishment ; it is not a bald assertion of the rights of law ; there is a redemptive element in it ; the rod itself conveys a call to the Cross. God has never answered our sin merely by punishment. To have contented Himself with punishment, strictly as such, would have been to proclaim His weakness. Nothing is easier than to measure sin by penalty, and to make an end of transgression by a visitation of the rod. All this, however, is weakness itself ; it is impotent compromise ; it leaves the great rebellion untouched. God answers sin not by His hand only, but by His heart. When we ask, how does God propose to encounter sin ? He does not point to the spear of lightning, and say, So long as that spear is at my command the sinner shall not go unpunished ; He does not refer us to the thunder of His power, and say, So long as I can avail Myself of such resources the sinner shall be humiliated : all this would amount to less than nothing ; it is negative ; it is puerile, if it be considered strictly within its own limits ; God, instead of confining Himself to penalty, sets up the Cross, and shows men the sinfulness of sin through the depth and tenderness of His own mercy. Man seeks to magnify his own righteousness, by pronouncing sentence of condemnation upon other people. Man is apt to think that he will be considered virtuous if he speak loudly against other people's vices. It is possible to have quite a genius in devising penalties, and yet for the heart to know nothing of true loyalty to virtue. Magistracy is one thing, righteous-

ness is another. Law-making may be reduced to a science, but law-keeping comes out of the heart. All human legislation in reference to crime is of necessity incomplete, because it touches simply the overt act, and not the motive or the spirit underlying and explaining the life. All incompleteness is weakness, and weakness has but three courses before it—it succumbs to an ignominious fate; it takes advantage of compromise; or it defends itself by exaggeration. All human penal law is *ex post facto;* it is made after the crime; it is something that comes up to meet a certain class of facts; or by so much as human law is apparently anticipative, it is founded upon inferences and probabilities which make it really retrospective. Crime came first, the statute book came next. On the other hand, God's treatment of sin was determined before the creation of man; for we read in the Holy Book of the Lamb *slain from before the foundation of the world.* The idea of redemption was established before the infliction of mere punishment could by possibility be accomplished. The Cross is the first figure in the immeasurable past. Redemption lies at the very foundation of the Divine government. It is no afterthought; it is not the device of a magistracy organised to put down public crime; it is the expression of the infinite righteousness and the infinite love of God.

Then let us be clear upon this point, lest sentiment overrule reason. We are not to suppose that the punishment of sin is either unrighteous or inconsistent with the love of God. Sin *must* be punished. The law must smite. Sin punishes itself; it kindles a fire in the soul; it pierces the sinner with the sharpest sword. No man can do wrong without smarting for his iniquity, and all his smarting is a testimony that God is on the throne, that God is looking on, that the streams of His infinite life are flowing through the universe in one continual protest against all evil, and one continuous encouragement and benediction upon all good. We shall abuse the spirit of the text if we imagine that by going to God we shall escape the punishment of our sins. It is possible to imagine those who have not been closely listening to our argument to say, "Inasmuch as God deals so mercifully and lovingly with sinners, we shall leave our whole case in His hand and cast ourselves upon His mercy, in order that we may escape the consequences of our sin." You may say that if you please, but let it be understood that it is not with the authority of the argument which we have now been considering. It is more than a delusion, it is practical blasphemy. By going to God, you go to punishment; in appearing before His infinite holiness, you bring upon your souls a swift and sure condemnation of everything that is evil in your nature; but herein is the difference between the punishment man accords, and the punishment with which God visits the sinner who casts himself into His hands—under the Divine punishment there lies the great and infinitely precious fact, that *God is seeking the salvation of the sinner.* The punishment is not merely negative. God's government is

not a mere magistracy. It is a moral dominion—a government of the heart.

Need a word be said about the fallacy that men would deal more lightly with one another, if the whole question of punishment were left between themselves, because of selfish reasons. First of all, the suggestion is philosophically untrue; and, secondly, its moral unsatisfactoriness is obvious. The conscience would remain after the judgment. To deal lightly with sin is actually to commit sin. To tell lies to one another, by way of modifying each other's guilt, is a method which carries its own condemnation. We must accept the great principle, that *punishment can never lessen sin;* that punishment is strictly negative; and that God alone can accompany punishment with a scheme of righteous and merciful redemption. It is good to fall into Thy hands, gracious Father; when Thou dost smite, it is that we, feeling the bitterness of sin, may desire to abandon it; when Thou art angry, we see how true and pure is Thy love; when Thou dost terribly thunder against us, it is not that we may be driven to destruction, but that we may be called to salvation and peace.

What is wanted for a full acceptation of the principle of this text?

1. *A deep sense of sin.* David had it: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done, and now I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." If men have inadequate notions of sin, they will, of necessity, have inadequate notions of its treatment. Come to God with a sense of your own integrity, with a spirit that is prepared to defend itself against the charges of God's law, and the Gospel will be to you nothing but a mockery, an offer that is to be declined with indignation, if not with contempt. You do not need it; you are imagining that you are superior to it; you are not at all on the moral line on which the Gospel operates. But let the heart be smitten with a sense of evil; let the whole soul cry out with contrition and with despair; let the watchword of the life be, "O wretched man that I am!" then in that hour of extremity, when all nature gives way, when life is a burden, when futurity is a threat, let it be proposed to you to fall into the hands of God, who is gracious, long-suffering, and infinitely merciful, and who will mingle with all His judgment elements of love, and you will feel that the proposition appeals to the very deepest needs of your spirit, and that there is but one answer which can be made to an offer so infinitely gracious. I am well assured that my word will be received in one of two ways: to those who are overwhelmed with a sense of their own moral respectability it will be a word without meaning or application; to the broken-hearted and contrite, to whom sin has become the most tormenting problem of their lives, it will be a word of illumination and encouragement.

2. *An unreserved committal of our case to God.* David gave himself up entirely to God's will. Mark the beauty of the expression, Let me

fall into the hand of the Lord; not, let me stand before the Lord and consult Him, laying before Him my opinions and pointing out a modification of His judgment; not that at all; God would not have treated with David on any such terms, nor will He treat with us if we come before Him with a proposition instinct with such selfishness. We must fall into the hand of God—an expression which signifies resignation, perfect trust in the divine righteousness and benevolence, and an entire committal of our whole case to the disposal of God.

Fall into the hand of God, O misjudged man! We are living in a world where misjudgments are being constantly pronounced upon our conduct, our words are mistaken, our tones are perverted, our whole spirit is misunderstood: what is our hope? and in what does our soul find rest?—in the belief that God is over all, and that He himself pronounces the final judgment! In doing what is right and true, and doing it with individuality of method, you will unquestionably expose yourself to the censure of many critics. Men who profess to be men of taste, men who have made taste their idol, men whose taste is so highly cultivated as to have become the most odious vulgarity, will tell you that their whole nature shrinks from this or that method of doing things, and they will not be slow to suppose that because what they call their "whole nature" shrinks from something that bears your individuality, they are, therefore, very lofty and righteous judges! God knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust; and in the hour of His judgment He will look upon our life, not in such incomplete portions as are visible to the public eye, but in all the secret things, in all the hidden elements and forces that have gone to make it what it is; He will look at our life from its beginning to its end, and see how circumstances that never could be told to men have often asserted an overruling claim in our spirit, and caused us to assume attitudes and relations which have actually been distressingly painful to ourselves; He will judge not by the outward but by the inward, and if it be possible for His infinite love to find in us one redeeming feature, He will so magnify that as to cause our weaknesses and our failures, in so far as they have been mere infirmities, to be forgotten in the amplification of those features on which He himself can look with any degree of approbation. The whole world is in the hand of God, let us be thankful. The whole past is under His review, let us leave it with the assurance that His judgment is righteous. The whole future is under His control, let us pass into it with the steadiness, the quietness and the majesty of those who know that all the resources of God are placed at the disposal of all who put their whole trust in His wisdom and love. We can talk but inadequately about these things now; poor are our best notions about the goodness of the Divine rule and the blessedness of falling into the Divine hands. Not until we reach heaven can we fully know how good a thing it is to have given up our whole heart and life to the keeping and direction of our heavenly Father.

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 21st, 1870.

THE CALL OF ABRAM.

This morning I propose to read the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis, pausing here and there, as occasion may arise, to paraphrase the narrative, or give such exposition and illustration of it as may help us to realize the scene, and apply the doctrine to our own circumstances. Take the first verse :—

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

God's claim upon the individual life is here asserted. God detaches men from early associations, from objects of special care and love, and makes them strangers in the earth. The family idea is sacred, but the Divine will is, so to speak, more sacred still; when the God of the families of the earth calls men from their kindred and their father's house, all tributary laws must be swallowed up by the great stream of the Divine Fatherhood. These calls, so shattering in their social effect, and so painful in their bearing upon the individual heart, are necessary to shake men out of the secondary positions into which they would settle themselves. All earthly parentage is but a reflection of God's fatherly relation to mankind; and if we have idolised and abused that which is merely secondary and typical, we need such calls as these to remind us that over all there reigns, in gracious majesty and tender righteousness, the Maker, the Sovereign, and the Redeemer of our lives.

In this call we see an outline of the great providential system under which we live. God comes into a family and breaks it up; God sets the individual man upon a special course; God shows the land in which we are to dwell. Up to this point there is harshness in the startling

demand. Abram is to go out, not knowing whither; and if he *did* know whither, still the fact that he was called to break up old and endeared associations is enough to fill him with sorrow and dismay. We must read further if we would recover composure of faith in God's goodness. The first verse is authoritative; but man cannot live a great life upon mere authority, even when the authority is known to be Divine. Men would starve on law. To law must be added grace, if the soul is to know all the joy and peace of life in God. Read the next verses, and say if there be in them one tone of severity.

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Great lives are trained by great promises. The world has never been left without a great promise singing in its wondering and troubled heart —something to rely upon, something to appeal to when difficulty was extreme. God never calls men for the purpose of making them less than they are, except when they have been dishonouring themselves by sin. This may be taken as a law: God's calls are upward; they are calls towards fuller life, purer light, and sweeter joy. Men do not know their full capacity except in their service of God: His presence in the soul is a life-expanding and life-glorifying presence. This is the claim that we set up on behalf of true religion—the religion of Jesus Christ—that it exalts human nature, it enriches the soul, it increases the substance and worth of manhood. To confound obedience with slavery, is to overlook the argument which is founded upon the nature of God; to obey the little, the mean, the paltry, is to be enslaved; to enter the cage of custom or passion, is to be subject to bondage; but to accept the invitation of the Sun, and to poise ourselves in his gladdening presence is liberty and joy.

Look at this promise as throwing light upon the compensations of life. Abram is called to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house, and, so far, there is nothing but loss. Had the call ended here, the lot of Abram might have been considered hard; but when did God take anything from a man, without giving him manifold more in return? Suppose that the return has not been made immediately manifest, what then? Is to-day the limit of God's working time? Has He no provinces

beyond this little world? Does the door of the grave open upon nothing but infinite darkness and eternal silence? But even confining the judgment within the hour of this life, it is true that God never touches the heart with a trial without intending to bring in upon it some grander gift, some tenderer benediction.

Look at this promise as showing the oneness of God with His people: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." The good man is not alone. Touch him, and you touch God. Help him, and your help is taken as if it were rendered to God himself. This may give us an idea of the sublime life to which we are called—we live, and move, and have our being in God; we are temples, our life is an expression of Divine influence; in our voice there is an undertone of Divinity.

Look at this promise, as showing the influence of the present over the future: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This is a principle rather than an exception of true life. Every man should look upon himself as an instrument of possible blessing to the whole world. One family should be a blessing to all families within its influence. Of course, the true and full interpretation of the promise is to be found in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Brother of all who receive Him by faith into their hearts; yet there are great secondary and collateral meanings of the promise, which ought not to be held in contempt. We should not be looking for the least but for the greatest interpretations of life—not to make our life as little and ineffective as possible, but to give it fulness, breadth, strength, to which the weary and the sorrowful may look with confidence and thankfulness. Christianity never reduces life to a minimum; it developes it, strengthens it in the direction of Jesus Christ's infinite perfectness and beauty.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.
5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.
6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

There will always be central figures in society, men of commanding life, around whom other persons settle into secondary positions. We cannot all be Abrams; we cannot all have distinct names in the future.

Yet, though we cannot have the greatness, we may have the goodness of Abram. But few men in any country touch the highest point of fame; thousands upon thousands in all generations come to honour and influence, yet in a few months after their death their names cease to have any interest but for the smallest circles. This reflection ought not to discourage virtue. Peace of heart is better than mere renown. To be known in heaven is the best fame. To have a place in the love of God is to enjoy the true exaltation. In the company now journeying towards Canaan, there is one figure that gives unity and meaning to the whole group, yet there is not one in all the band whose life, judged by the Divine standard, is unimportant.

The one man, Abram, holds the promise; all the other persons in the company hold it secondarily. All men do not receive the direct revelation and vision of God; they are followers, not leaders—echoes, not voices. Personal supremacy, to be beneficent and enduring, should be the result of Divine election. Abram was supreme because God had called him. The salvation of the soul is undoubtedly an individual act; the soul must think, repent, believe, resolve for itself. No man can repent or believe for another, yet in the working out of Divine plans one man must follow another, and be content to shine with reflected light. It is so in statesmanship, in literature, and in civilization generally. Take Abram away from this group, and the group becomes ridiculous. One man is called to stand nearer God than another, and to interpret the purposes of God to the world. There is an empty defiance which proclaims itself in the well-known terms, "I don't pin my faith to any man's sleeve;" "I think for myself;" there is nothing but vanity in such lofty pretensions, made, indeed, the more mischievous by the grain of truth which barely saves them from the charge of insanity. As a matter of fact, we do pin our faith to each other's sleeve. Lot believes in Abram, the weak believe in the strong; we all follow our respective captains and leaders. Abram was the minister of God to all about him. Had his faith gone down, the whole company would have been disorganised; his followers were courageous in *his* courage, and hopeful in *his* hope. We think it a great honour to be set so high in the service of God; it is so truly, yet it must be a burdensome responsibility, and often a pricking thorn, for those who follow can bring reproach and calumny to bear upon Abram and Moses and the chosen servants of God. There is

a temptation for Lot to imagine himself as good as Abram, and in that imagining is the explanation of many of the petty torments which fall to the lot of men whom God has taken into His secret counsel.

The Abrams of society often have a difficult task. They cannot always explain themselves fully. Sometimes they cannot even vindicate themselves, nor can they account for circumstances which bear heavily against them. They live a separate life. They have secret intercourse with God. The translation of things heard in heaven is always difficult and often impossible.

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. 8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. 9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

We shall be much comforted in this pilgrim life if we think of God's relation to places, habitations, countries, and geographical positions. The wilderness and the garden are God's; the fountain and the stream are directed in their course by the creating mind. Men are not here and there by haphazard. Cities are not founded by mere chance. Before the city there was a process of reasoning; before the process of reasoning there was Divine suggestion—geography, as well as astronomy, is of God. "The earth is the Lord's." I would be where God wills: with His blessing the desert shall be pleasant as the fruitful field; —without it the fruitful field shall mock the appetite which it tempts, and the river shall become as blood in my mouth.

Abram set up his altar along the line of his march. Blessed are they whose way is known by marks of worship. The altar is the highest seal of ownership. God will lightly forsake His temples. This setting up of the altar shows that our spiritual life ought to be attested by outward sign and profession. Abram had the promise in his heart, yet he did not live a merely contemplative life; he was not lost in religious musings and prophesyings—he built his altar and set up his testimony in the midst of his people, and made them sharers of a common worship.

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. 11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: 12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is

his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

Showing what the best of men are when they betake themselves to their own devices. As the minister of God, Abram is great and noble; as the "architect of his own fortune," he is cowardly, selfish, and false. I seek for no palliation of such conduct; it invites and deserves malediction and vengeance. In our own life we know what it is to have great faith and great unbelief. Abram went out at God's bidding, cheerfully encountering all the trials of pilgrimage in unknown places, yet he cannot trust God to take care of his wife. How little are the greatest men! If we are never stronger than our weakest point, we should take heed lest in our proud sufficiency the dart strike us in the vulnerable spot. It is a bad thing to rack our brains for excuses on behalf of the Bible worthies when they fall; if God did not excuse them, we need not stretch our charity into a covering for their sins. A lie was twice a lie in the mouth of a man like Abram. Where there was great grace there should have been great courage. We are not to qualify the disgrace by talking about spots in the sun; we are to call poison poison, and to learn by the failures of other men that our own life will be called to trials which will need higher strength than merely human power.

The last three verses of the chapter are these:—

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. 20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

In this matter Pharaoh was a greater, a nobler man than Abram, Natural nobleness ought never to be underrated. Why begrudge to the heathen a nobleness which was as surely of God as our own Christian excellence? There are men to-day who make no profession of Christian faith, whose honour, straightforwardness, and generosity would put to shame many who claim a good standing in the Church. I make this statement without reservation; yet it must be explained that it is not through Christianity, but for the *want of it*, that professors are humbled before men of the world; and it must be added, that men of natural elevation of temper and sentiment would attain a still intenser lustre by the possession of that life in Jesus Christ without which all other life is

either artificial or incomplete. Christianity does not equalise the character of all men, any more than the sun equalises the value of all trees. There are Christians who are barely saved from being devils, and if they are this *with* Christianity, what would they be *without* it? Christianity is not to be judged by the lowest, but by the highest. We should not judge the repute of a medical hospital by the attainments of a student who has been scarcely a month within its walls; it would be unfair to judge the master by the apprentice; why, then, seize upon an immature professor of the Christian religion, and judge Christianity by his imperfect and tottering character? We admire Pharaoh in the case before us; we like the clear, steady tone in which he remonstrates with the culprit; yet natural openness and honourableness of disposition must not be valued as a substitute for the renewed life which is wrought in men by God the Holy Ghost.

This incident shows that God calls men to special destinies, and that life is true and excellent in itself and in its influences only in so far as it is divinely inspired and ruled. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." The great demand is made upon *faith*. Life is to be *spiritual;* not made up of things that can be counted and valued, but of ideas, convictions, impulses, and decisions that are divine and imperishable. The world of faith is large, and rich, and brilliant. Those who live in it dominate over all lower worlds. They have their peculiar sorrows, yet they are strong enough to say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Have we received the call of God? Has God left us without command or promise? No! Every man of us has heard the command to repent and believe the gospel, and our destiny depends upon the answer we return. We are called to honour, glory, and immortality in Christ Jesus; let us awake and pursue our rugged but ever upward way!

In view of this incident men may fitly ask themselves at whose call they are proceeding in life? No man is at liberty to stray away at the bidding of his fancy, upsetting the order of civilization and inflicting discomfort upon all who are connected with him merely to gratify a whimsical curiosity. Society is founded upon order. Permanence is a condition of healthy

growth. On the other hand, where men are called of God to go forth, it should be theirs instantly and gladly to obey, how dark soever or stormy the night into which they move. Life is a discipline. Shrewd men say they want to know whither they are going before they set out on a journey; but men of higher shrewdness, men of Christian faith, often go out into enterprise and difficulty without being able to see one step before them. The watchword of the noblest, truest souls is "to walk by faith, not by sight;" faith has a wider dominion and a more splendid future. I call upon Christian young men to show *the practical strength of faith.* Don't pick your trembling steps across the stones pioneers have laid for you; be your own pioneers, make your own ways, and show the originality and high daring of profound trust in God. I dare say you may be afraid of rashness—you are partly right, yet it is possible you may hardly know what rashness is. It is certain that the world is deeply indebted to its rash men, its first travellers, its leading spirits. Prudence (in its ordinary but most inadequate sense) has done very little for the world except to tease and hinder many of its masters and sovereigns; it would have kept back every mariner from the deep, and deterred every traveller from the desert—it would have put out the fires of science, and clipped the wings of poetry—it would have kept Abram at home, and found Moses a comfortable settlement in Egypt. Beware of imprudent prudence; it will lull you to sleep, and bring you to a nameless and worthless end. Make heaven your aim!

"Complain not that the way is long—
What road is weary that leads there?
But let the angel take thy hand,
And lead thee up the misty stair,
And there with beating heart await,
The opening of the golden gate."

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 28th, 1870.

ON DIFFERENT WAYS OF DWELLING.

"Dwell deep. . . . . Dwell without care. . . . . Dwell alone."—Jer. xlix. 30, 31.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that these words are about to be treated strictly by way of accommodation, not of critical exposition. They may enable us to say something about methods of life, and help us to conduct a process of wise self-examination. They divide the subject so clearly that no attempt need be made to secure a better arrangement. Let us regard the several divisions rather as exhortations than descriptions—we are thus exhorted to "dwell deep," "dwell without care," and "dwell alone."

"*Dwell deep:*" have great principles at the very base of your character; have root in yourselves; see that you are not mere waifs and strays, the sport of every wind, but that you have laid hold of the very substance of life so firmly that not even storms may be able to shatter or destroy your being. Depth of life is not mystery of life; it is not unreasoning hope; it is intelligence, it is faith, it is reality. In all great buildings there is a good deal of unseen work. No matter how glittering the pinnacle, if the foundation be insecure, its glittering eminence is only so much danger. Reputation is the outward man, character is deep as the very life. What if our reputation be as the perishing scent of a frail flower, instead of the strength of a tree, whose roots have laid hold of the very fatness of the earth, and laced themselves upon the immoveable rock?

I feel warranted in urging this exhortation to deep-dwelling especially upon the attention of the young. There is much temptation in the

other direction. We are invited by the spirit of the times to dwell on the surface. To dig deep is to go against the age. To think about foundations is to think away from the importunity of custom. The young man of to-day must take care, or he will descend towards narrowness and poverty of character. All skaters are not navigators. It is one thing to skim over a frozen pond, and another to sail upon the troubled deep. A bottle is not full because it bears a label. The chaffering sparrow has as many wings as the eagle, but he cannot dip them in the same burning glory. A swaling candle is not to be mistaken for a comet. Men do not find in mushrooms the beams of which ships are built. We must distinguish between things that differ. Young men should strive less after ornament than depth of character. They must do the rough work of digging before they attempt the decorative work of papering and painting. If you are going to build a house, you don't begin with the painter and gilder. Alas! in building a life, many youths are content to dispense with the work that gives stability and duration. A pasteboard hut will do—yes, do, until it is borne off by the mocking winds, never to be seen again. I don't count your virtues by your buttons. Some men are all coat and no character: others read no book but the looking-glass: others mistake the mystery of an echo for the originality of a voice. A sad sight is a shallow young man—the dupe of a false gentility, or the slave of a fiery passion. He may *look* well, and yet be bad. He may advertise his tailor, yet disgrace his schoolmaster. Or, he may know much and yet *be* nothing. I have heard of a man who knew twenty-five languages, but never said anything worth hearing in any of them. It is one thing to talk about a ladder, and another to ascend it. It is one thing to know the road, and another to travel it. You may put books into you as men put hay into sacks; or you may vitalise them and reproduce them in blessed life. "*Dwell deep:*" young man, keep thine heart with all diligence; see that thy *principles* are right; let the flying fashions of a deceitful world go, and stand fast by the convictions that will be as a rod and a staff in the dark hour. "*Dwell deep:*" the storms will try us all; the winds will rise, the winter will send upon us its bitter cold, the floods will descend; *then*, blessed are they only who are founded upon a rock! I do not attempt to define the precise position you should occupy, but I urge you to be intelligent, consistent, and earnest in your convictions and habits. Be able to give a reason for the faith and hope that are in you. Be *true*. You may not be great, but you can be real. Your voice may be feeble, yet your

testimony may be distinct. I know of no more hopeful sign for a nation than that its young life should be devoutly in earnest. Let young men be given up to frivolous pursuits, let them ignore the claims of decided principles, let them be swayed by an uncertain and accommodating expediency, and the nation has already begun to decline ; on the other hand, where young men are intelligent, magnanimous, resolute, they will carry the nation through every crisis and cover it with the glory of successful battle. Young men who hear me this day, let my mouth be unto you as the mouth of the Lord of Hosts !

No life can be truly deep that is not truly religious. Flippancy can never secure the best purposes of life. We must have veneration, and veneration directed to the highest objects, if ever we are to test our capacity and carry it to the ultimate point of improvement. Religion binds us to the infinite ; it challenges our strongest powers ; it lures even weakness itself towards might and courage ; it speaks the word of hope and inspiration when we imagine that our whole task is exhausted. I claim for religion the highest influence upon the intellectual faculties : education may, so to speak, give them feet, but religion gives them wings ; and if, for a time, religion seems to abash and humble the mind, it is that afterwards it may give it a wider charter and stir it by a mightier impulse. Let us ask ourselves a few questions on this point. What is our religion ? Is it something assumed or something real ? Is it one with the soul or is it a mere adjunct ? Does it bear us above all fear, or does it but vary our torment ? Are we shamed away from our profession by every taunt flung at us by the audacious mocker ? By our answers to such questions as these, we shall best know whether we "dwell deeply" or merely cling to the treacherous surface. The young must not suppose that in being definite in their faith they cannot also be progressive. Elders, too, must be reminded that digging deeply is quite compatible with building beautifully and loftily. A man is not to be commended because he builds his house towards the cold north ; nor is he to be praised because he chooses windows that are low and narrow, and puts them all on the shady side of the house. Dig deeply, but build so as to receive the blessing of the sun and the salutation of the living breeze. Let your foundations be strong, but don't shrink from originality of architecture : be definite in your plan, yet liberal in your execution. What is meant by the exhortation to dig deeply ? It is that we may find the Stone, "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." The foundation is laid. Did ye never read in the

Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" To dwell in Christ, is to dwell deeply. To be hidden in the very life of Christ, is to dwell deeply. To be vitally interested in the never-ceasing intercession of Christ, is to dwell deeply. To be the temples of the Holy Ghost, is to dwell deeply. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

"*Dwell without care.*" We may accept this exhortation in two differing yet coincident senses. We are not to dwell carelessly: yet we are not to dwell fearfully; our independence of care is to arise from our trust in the love and sufficiency of God. It is possible to dwell without care, simply because we undervalue life; it is possible to dwell without care, because we hold life in subjection to the Divine will and in perfect confidence in Divine love. The apostle Paul says, "Be careful for nothing:" Peter says, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." It is in this sense that we are to live without care. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." If we care for God, He will care for us. It is hardly needful to go over the ground of definition and caution usually pointed out in treating of this method of life. I need not speak against carelessness, against extravagance, or against stoicism; we are agreed upon all this side of the case. What is wanted is power to realise in consistent and beneficent life our loving faith in God's supremacy and compassionateness. It is distinctly taught in the Scriptures that our first business is with the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Men who commit themselves to this business cast themselves on the whole breadth of God's exceeding great and precious promises. They invite God to help them—nay, more, they address the importunate challenge of their love to Him, and in doing so they must succeed. "O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." When we dwell without care, our

independence refers, not to the essence, but to the accidents of life. Our care begins and ends with God. We must be right with Him. The soul being right, the outward condition becomes of no moment. To be right with God is to sit upon His throne, and to view the affairs of life as God views them; to regard them in their entirety, and to be superior to their influence. Does he dwell without care who dwells without reason? Here is a man who boasts that he gives himself no concern about the difficulties of life; he takes things as they come; if they come sunnily, he gives them welcome; if threateningly, he winks at their frowning, and waits until they look better; he does not know what it is to spend a sleepless night, and as to meeting trouble half way, he smiles at the suggestion as a kind of practical joke. He is not unwilling that other people should work for him, if they are foolish enough so to do; if they have no other amusement, he does not begrudge them this innocent pastime; he expects things to be ready just when he wants them, and if they be not ready it never occurs to his well-regulated and serene mind that the blame may in some degree be chargeable upon himself. He may languidly admit that things are occasionally awkward, yet he can sing his fool's carol even in the face of the east wind, and take his sluggard's slumber on the roughest places of the bleakest road.

The uncarefulness to which the Christian is called is an expression of profound trust in his Heavenly Father. Let this be repeated again and again, that Christian serenity may be protected from the charge of stoicism; and that Christian faith may not be confounded with coarse and defiant presumption. We are distinctly called to uncarefulness, and our call is addressed to us in the most tuneful and persuasive manner. The duty is founded upon a promise—a voluminous and all-inclusive promise; we are summoned by the voice of music, we are inspired by the glad spirit of hope. Hear the proof of these assurances: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" We are called upon to give living illustration

of these principles, and are to remind ourselves that such illustration is often very subtle in its expression and influence. An impatient tone may betray us. An anxious look may dishonour the Master. One fretful action may becloud the lustre of our faith. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be, in all stedfastness, tranquillity, and cheerfulness! Ought not we to lead the music of the world? Ought not the peace of the very God of Peace to rule in our hearts, and to show itself in a blessed calm in all the relations of our trying life? What is the meaning of the wrinkled brow—the apprehensive eye—the hesitating tone;—are not these the signs of unbelief, the signature and token of an evil supremacy? All our uneasiness is a reflection upon God's goodness. Every assertion of our own strength is distrust of Omnipotence. O ye who are watched by the eye that needs no sleep, and that makes day for itself even where the darkness is deepest—ye guarded ones around whom stand the ministers of God as the mountains stand round about Jerusalem—ye who are named in the covenant which God made with his Son, and for whom the Son is waiting in the heavens, consider your high calling, and by the confidence which you have in God show the world that they who care for God escape the corrosion of profane anxiety!

"*Dwell alone.*" By this exhortation is not intended a call to hermitic seclusion, to misanthropy, to churlish loneliness, or the like. We need not pause to point out how such an exhortation would offend all our social instincts, and upset everything that endears man to man. Yet the exhortation may be so interpreted as to make its application of the most excellent advantage to us. Sociality may become dissipation. Even sworn friends may see too much of one another. The pastor may be too much amongst his people. Neighbours may be too often on their neighbours' threshold. I wish to teach distinctly, what I myself have enjoyed most deeply, that solitude is needful to the highest culture of life. Avoid the crowd. Be independent of artificial excitement. Have resources in yourselves; specially, walk with God! Shallow and tormenting is the life which is often led in great cities. Think of a man measuring his enjoyment by the number of dinner invitations which he holds; think of a woman measuring her life by yards of satin, by concerts, dances, and promenades! Yet this is done. There are men in London who never open a book. There are women, even in this centre of the world, who from year's end to year's end never utter a serious or really sensible sentence. Society seems to be given up to excitement.

Paint, gilt, noise, show—these are the idols of to-day's civilization. To have "been out" somewhere is the proof of having enjoyed life. If I might presume to offer advice to men of business, I should earnestly say, As often as possible get beyond the reach of letters, newspapers, telegraphs, controversies, politics, and all other exciting and vexatious influences, and accustom yourselves to *your own society*. Get away to a distance, and look upon daily life as it really is. Don't fear to look at your past course, and to review with the severest criticism the main positions you have from time to time assumed. So long as you are in the thick of the fight, you cannot see things as they really are. You mistake distances and proportions. You cannot see the range of the various movements that are taking place around you. Go to the hill-top; vary your fighting with meditation, for the best battles are often won by thought. To be always in the crowd is not to live, it is but to struggle. Publicity irritates and wastes life. It is possible to live so much in public as to be actually *afraid* to be alone! Yes; I am quite serious in saying so. There are great bankers, merchants, speculators, who dare not keep company with themselves; they are frightened when the door shuts out the last visitor! They will not read, they dare not think, they cannot pray! Such men are the helpless victims of circumstances. The cruel lash is never off their back. The tyrant will not let them stand still. Like the child's top, they can now only spin so long as they are whipped. To be drunk with such excitement is to suffer from the most deadly intoxication.

In recommending solitude, it must not be supposed that I am recommending melancholy or morbid brooding. Loneliness may quite as easily become a mischief as a blessing. When we seek to be alone, it should be that our view of the Father may be more distinct and impressive. Jesus Christ sought retirement that He might renew His strength: on the solitary hill He was preparing for the busy city; His midnight prayer was preparatory to His mid-day beneficence; when He was alone, He was least alone. We must never seek for the loneliness which shuns the Divine presence, for if we find it we find the devil clothed in redoubled power. Godless solitude is often the forerunner of suicide. It is favourable to the pressure of evil suggestions. It is destitute of the elements which save the mind by actually distracting it. Beware of godless solitude—it is as the very gate of hell!

As earnestly as I caution you against godless solitude, I would exhort you to avail yourselves of the retirement which will bring you, as it

were, face to face with God. We need repose. We cannot always live in the tempest. We must now and then talk to our own hearts, and make the acquaintance of our own souls. Is it a creditable state of society in which men seldom see their own little children in consequence of the unceasing hurry and drive of business? In the early morning they leave their little ones asleep, in the late evening they return to find them asleep again; and all day long the men themselves have not had one hour's quiet communion with their own hearts! This is suicide! It is not the suicide of rope, or steel, or poison; it is not followed by coroners' inquests or startling announcements in newspapers, but it is suicide for all that! "Man cannot live by bread alone." When he attempts to do so, he makes a covenant with death and a sure bond with hell: he feeds the animal at the expense of the spiritual; he spends a lifetime in digging his own grave, and all his days are but a swift journey to the pit.

I don't know that more need be added, except to repeat the exhortation, "Dwell deeply: Dwell without care: Dwell alone." *Dwell deeply*, by living, moving, and having your being in God: *dwell without care*, by casting your burden in childlike trust upon the Lord: *dwell alone*, by being independent of the deceitful excitements which dazzle only that they may destroy. Dwell deeply, and the years shall never waste your power; dwell without care, and your strength will be ready for the highest uses; dwell alone, and your fellowship will be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Blessed One, who hast all life in Thy keeping, enrich us with heavenly strength, save us from all the temptations of earthly anxiety, and when we shut out the world may we be shut in with Thee! We would establish our house upon the Rock: we would put our confidence in God: we would dwell in the hallowed silence which helps us to hear Thy footstep. Go with Thy servants to their several engagements, give them much wisdom and strength, show them the poverty of this world and the riches of Thy kingdom, and may they instantly and thankfully choose the better part!

The City Temple.

A Discourse delivered by

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 5th, 1870.

ON GOD'S POWER THE COMFORT OF HIS PEOPLE.

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."—Isaiah xl. 28.

These words are addressed to the despondent, and at the first sound of them it would appear as if those who were cast down were spoken to in a voice of thunder. It would appear also as if a softer tone were better adapted to the condition of the persons referred to in the context, viz., those who were mourning God's absence, and sighing over the unwelcome lot which has come upon them. But this great interrogation seems as if the very thunder had taken in charge God's defence and man's elevation. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? Sometimes the voice of consolation seems to come to us out of the depths of God's heart; sometimes it is as if comfort were spoken to us in a whisper. Oftentimes God says He will not address us by the earthquake, and the stormy wind, and the rending fire, but He will come to us in an undertone, and find us out by the persuasive, gentle, penetrating pleading of His love; but here it is as if the Comforter stood above all created heights and thundered down from them upon the weary, and the desponding, and the faint-hearted. The terms by which God is described are not what may be termed the gracious designations which are often employed to describe Him; it is not the Father, the Redeemer, the Gentle One; it is the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, as if Divine comfort were not a sentiment only, as if Divine comfort does not come only out of the

Divine emotions, but pours itself down upon us from all that is majestic, dominant, mighty, immeasurable, royal, and grand in the Divine nature.

Then if He fainteth not, neither is weary, why should He rest? God rested, and set up in the midst of time a Sabbath day. How so? The word must not be interpreted to the disparagement of the great text that is now before us. There are two conditions on either of which man may rest, on one of which only does God retire from His work. The first condition is completeness, the second is weariness. God finished His work and rested. He rested because the work was finished; we rest because our poor little strength is wasted, and we sigh for the lengthening shadow, and need to be recruited by sleep. God finishes His work, and then He rests, not as one who is weary, but as one who has completed his design. We shall rest one day in that higher sense; in the meantime we have left our column unfinished, we have left our book incomplete, we have hurried away from our engagements, they are all waiting for us to go back in an hour; we rest because of an exhaustion of our strength, but He who is yonder in the heavens, throned above all heights, rests because His word is completeness—His efforts are perfection.

"*Hast thou not known?*" This is not a new revelation. Please to observe that, lest you find here an excuse for despondency, and a sufficient explanation of the plaintive and mournful tone to which your life is often set. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard?"—it is an appeal to memory, and that is a strong point in all the Divine pleading. We do not read here for the first time that God fainteth not, neither is weary. It is a mark of interrogation that is beautifully made a challenge of recollection. Our memory is to be as the prophet of the Lord in our life. Recollection is to be inspiration; the forty years gone are a pledge of the forty years to come. If we are clear upon this point I could stand a long while here, and reason until I rekindled hope in every heart that is sad and weary. I am not to argue a point with you that is very deep in theology. I have only to come to your own life and awaken your own memory—stir your recollection. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? Let a man be faithful to his own recollections, and it is impossible he can long be despondent, weary, and slow of heart to lay hold of the great work and discipline of life. There is no heart in this house that has not its own peculiar memories of the Divine strength and of Divine interposition, of Divine interpretations of knotty questions in life, and of Divine help in the hour of extremity, when sorrow was agony and when agony was despair. And it is the preacher's strength that he has to speak directly into people's hearts. He has not to argue something that is altogether outside of them, and that has no counterpart in their own life and spirit. He has to speak truths that are to be answered by the echoes of the heart, and every man is to say to him as he proceeds from point to point in his high argument and winning per-

suasion, "Master, thou hast said the truth." Let us gather ourselves around God's all-mightiness and God's all-knowingness, that we may be comforted, and stimulated, and enriched.

Is God all-mighty? Then do not fear for the stability of His works. We have no occasion to be afraid lest the sun should miss his way. What guarantee have we that the stars shall glitter in their places? Is it because we appoint our watchmen that they come to smile and shine upon us, pouring light into our dark hearts, and speaking hope into our despairing and gloomy souls? What guarantee have we that the summer is coming? God's word. "Seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." What guarantee have we? We have little pieces of paper on which we write our I O U, and we have bonds and covenants, and our strong rooms, in which we secretly and silently lock up our pieces of precious paper. You say about any disputed covenant, It is in the bond, it is so nominated in the bond. The bond is all you have to rely upon. But we look for the continuance of these things, the keeping up of God's great temple, because God's word has been given, because God's sufficiency underlies, and encompasses, and gives stability to all His works. And in this view of the case it is very humiliating to meddlesome men—an exceedingly annoying thing—that there are parts of creation, parts of our own creation, out of which we are shut. How nice a thing it would be for some men of leisure, if they were called upon to improve the stars a little, and to call up the seasons one by one, and to say when it should rain, and when it should not rain, and when the east wind should blow, and when the south-west wind should pour its blessing on the rejoicing landscape! God does not want us there at all. He seems to be able to do quite without us there, and it is wonderful how small a cage it is within which the vastest mind is enclosed, and what very little pieces of work God asks any man to do in the creation that is around him. He can dig a little, and plough a little, and he can throw in his seed; but he has no power to tell the sun when to come and when to go, and in what degree of heat to shine upon his little garden or his paltry field. But we work because God *is*. We have no fear of the stability of His works, and therefore we proceed from day to day in procuring our daily bread, and setting in operation all the forces that are needful for the cultivation alike of our bodily and mental life. This is very humbling in one of its aspects, because we have nothing whatever to do with all that is highest and grandest in the creation. We are to do the servant's work. Let me see; do not some persons advertise that they object to menial employment? Menial employment! Why, there is nothing but menial employment if we really knew it, and yet no employment is menial if it be accepted from God's hand, and wrought out according to the measure of His commandment and the inspiration of His call.

Is God all-mighty? Then have no fear about the realization of His promises. Oftentimes it is difficult to see how certain promises are to be realized. We have nothing to do with that whatever. God keeps our hands off His promises quite as surely as He keeps them off His stars, and if He won't let us intermeddle with His planets, and do our little scrubbing and burnishing upon those great lights, He will not ask us to have anything to do with the outworking and realization of His promises. He asks that their fulfilment be left to Him, and afterwards He will challenge our own life as the witness, and answer, and confirmation of all that is gracious and all that is sure in the outworking of His words of promise. You do not make so very much of it with all your bonds, and guarantees, and assurances, and oaths. You really don't. If you live in the paper and parchment region altogether, you live a poor, shallow life. The greatest promises are moral promises, and I care not how much paper a man may sign; if his heart is wrong, he will swear away his own signature. Yes, if he has not signed with his heart, it is of poor account that he has signed with his hand. He can look at his signature and say it is his, and then work as if he had never written one single letter of it. It is God's *heart* that comes down with His signature. He has never dealt with us only by His hand. His hand has been the servant of His heart; because of His *moral* attributes all that He has promised shall be fulfilled to the letter. No, no, not fulfilled to the *letter*. What *letter* can hold God? The letter is only as the little river bank, the great waters of His love will overflow all the limitations of the most ambitious letter. God cannot be known by letters. They are but as the hem of His garment, they lie a long way from His soul.

Is God all-mighty, all-mighty? Then do not imagine you can escape His judgments. His lightnings find us out. His sharp spear penetrates our secrecy. You have evaded Him now fifty years, and you think you can do it fifty more. Believe me, as speaking the word of the Lord, *you cannot*. Has the ox that has been driven into the fat pasture escaped the knife? Look at the noble animal there. Look at the rich grass or clover, and see the sunshine falling upon the scene, and the ox says, "I am at rest, I have escaped the knife of the slayer," not knowing that the pasture is on the way to the slaughter-house, and that next to its death stands the rich blessing of its life. There are many oxen that are being prepared for the slaughter when they little think it.

Is God all-mighty? Then be assured that the throne of right shall stand upon the ruins of all wrong; but here God is apparently at a disadvantage, because you cannot kill evil with the sword. The abolition of evil is a work of time, requiring the combination, the conspiring of innumerable moral influences and educational forces: but that conspiring is going on. The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, as some men count slackness. The kings of the earth—those decorated

playthings, when not true men and kings in heart as well as in hand—the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying—this is their bond—"Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." That is one side of the picture. What is the answer? He that sitteth in the heavens *sitteth* without agitation, discomposure, or momentary apprehension. He that *sitteth* in the heavens shall laugh—*what* laugh? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together; they get up their little plot, and they are going now to bring things their own way, and the great, quiet Sovereign of all shall—*what?*—shake Himself, call His thunder, take down His spear? No!—shall *laugh!* *Laugh*—and no man survives the laughter of God's derision! A terrible thing it is to be laughed at by God! Strike us, reason us down, send angels to bind us, and in these humiliations we shall find some little tribute to our greatness; but, O God! do not *laugh* at us. When God sets the universe laughing at a man, where can the man find rest? There is a poor outlook for those who are going to fight God!

God is not only powerful, also *all-wise*. There is no searching of His understanding. Infinite strength would terrify us, but infinite strength under the dominion of infinite mind recovers us from the tremendous shock which comes of abstract, immeasurable, unwasting strength. The forces of nature are not lawless. Storms are more than storms, as they appear to us. Behind them all is God's mind, God's controlling, directing intelligence. The lightning does not come out at its own bidding to smite the tree, and the tower, and the temple, and to blight the prospects of man. The lightning always comes and strikes, or passes on, at God's bidding, and under God's control. The east wind is not sent to us by some spiteful power that takes delight in withering up our strength; it comes because the Lord hath need of it in some sense or way.

Is God all-wise? Then the darkest providences have meaning. We *will* set ourselves as God's interpreters, and because we cannot make straight lines out of our crooked lot we think that God has turned our life into inextricable confusion. The darkest hours in our life have some intent, and it is really not needful that we should know all at once what that intent is. Let us keep within our own little sphere, and live a day at a time, and breathe a breath at a time, and be content with one pulsation at a time, and interpretation will come when God pleases, and as He pleases.

Is God all-wise? Then His plan of salvation is complete and final, and we shall waste our strength, and show how great is our folly, by all attempts to improve the method of redemption and recovery of the world. What is there of God's we can improve? Will you go out to-day and

find any little plant that spring has thrown down already in the face of winter, and improve it? Try it. You can surely make something more out of a primrose than God has made. You could amend the buttercup and the daisy. Try it. I shall not take you up into the higher realms, but we will just keep on the grass, and see what we can do down there. Is there a blade of grass in all the meadows of the earth we can improve, looking at it as God constructed it, not as it has been withered and destroyed in any degree, but as God made it. Can you improve any one thing that God has made? Then why seek to improve the method of salvation which He has set up according to the revelation of His Holy Book, in the person and through the ministry of His Son? I will not even stop to argue whether this is God's Book or not; I will take the method of salvation as it is here declared, and rest the whole argument upon it. That will call you back from wandering into any collateral questions as to whether this is God's Book or not. Improve what is laid down here, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Improve it! We will not argue whether these words are what is called inspired or not; we will take them merely as words, take them as an idea, take them as if the poorest wretch in all the world had spoken them, and I ask you to improve those words if you can. Love, Divine love, Divine love giving, Divine love giving its only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth—not payeth, not worketh, not putteth out some external strength, but believeth—should not perish, but have everlasting life. I wonder any heart can hear these words without saying instantly, "These words shall lie at the very root of my life; I will live upon them, and I will defy death in their strength." This congregation ought to be converted instantly under the utterance of words so graphic, so sublime, so tender, so far-reaching and all-blessing as these.

Is God all-wise? Then our individual life is all understood by Him. That life is but dimly known to ourselves. We catch glimpses of it here and there, but its scope and meaning are still unrevealed to us. We are often in shadow. There are scattered rays of light, but no steady shining of the sun which protects us from the mystery of much darkness. It is enough that God knows our life, and that His wisdom is pledged as our defence. To-morrow is coming upon us, and we know not with what messages and revelations, with what joys and troubles; but God is coming with it, and in His path is the brightness of all-sufficient wisdom. We are quickened by the very mysteries of our life: view them atheistically, and they become terrors and distresses before which the most daring courage quails; but regard them as under the control of beneficent power, and an eye of glory opens in the very centre of the gloom.

Is God all-wise? Then we have a guarantee of endless variety in our future studies and services. God is ever extending our knowledge of His works, in reward of the endeavours we are making to acquaint ourselves with the wonders by which we are enclosed. We have found nothing of mere repetition in His plans. Each star has its own glory, each flower has a bloom and a figure peculiarly its own; the very stones are known by a distinctive impress. We have eternity before us—in itself a terrible consideration, only tolerable when thought of in connection with God's infinite wisdom: men grow weary when doomed to continuous pursuit of one object; monotony depresses and enfeebles the mind; to think, therefore, of having to live eternally is in itself a punishment, apart from the fact that no hour of the endless duration shall be unblessed by the hallowed excitement occasioned by increasing intelligence and deepening love. God will ever have something new to communicate to the mind of His servants: secret after secret will be given up to their possession; realm after realm will be thrown open to their investigation; and when unnumbered ages have expired, the infinite riches of Divine wisdom will be undiminished.

The subject, thus hurriedly sketched, forces upon us the solemn inquiry—What is our relation to this Dread Being, whose power is infinite, and whose wisdom is past finding out? We must sustain some relation to Him. We are the loyal subjects of His crown, or rebels in His empire. Pause, and determine the answer! Everything depends upon our relation to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Have we repented of sin—have we poured out our hearts in rivers of contrition—have we yielded our hearts in reply to the all-entreating and overwhelming argument of the Cross? You reverence God—that is not enough; you are lost in admiration of His marvellous power as shown in the courses of nature—that is not enough; you see proofs of His existence and government in every leaf of the forest—that is not enough; these things have no relation to *sin*, they do not recover our lost sonship, they leave untouched the blackest and saddest facts of our life! Nature itself, brilliant and tuneful, is but a mocking mystery apart from the Cross—it is a lustrous grave, a prison under the name of a palace, a land of captivity and sorrow. Souls are not saved by studying the works of nature. Astronomy and geology, botany and chemistry, have no redeeming message for hearts burdened with a sense of guilt; we must go further and go deeper, a cry must be sent up to the dwelling-place of the Most High. O God, save us! O God, be merciful unto us! O God, redeem us from the slavery and torment of sin! And whilst we are yet speaking, a voice addresses the anxious heart—"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." *That* is what we want! That is sweet as morning light to men who have long sat in great darkness, and precious as the voice of the Deliverer to bondsmen who

have desired to die. And is there not a word of encouragement for those who are rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins? We are saved from fear. We have the freedom of the City of God. In moments of exhaustion we look unto the hills whence cometh our help—in times of embarrassment we take counsel with Divine wisdom. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. What time I am afraid, I will trust in God. The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my heart, of whom shall I be afraid? We are called unto trust. We are entitled to exult in the goodness and majesty of God. Ours is to be no depressing religion, but a religion of boundless joy. Our springs are not in ourselves: we hew no broken cisterns to ourselves; we undertake not our own affairs; we dwell in the security of God's power, and as for wisdom, we ask and receive. My message is to troubled men—to troubled hearts—to desponding souls; and how gracious is the reviving word! True, it is uttered as if through the trumpet of thunder, yet its tones soothe and inspire the soul. Let us arise from our hiding-places, and serve the Lord with renewed power; He waits to gather us into His infinite strength and to make us wise with perfect understanding.

Eternal One, we are filled with joy in this Thy house; our hearts are made exceeding glad, and our comfort is as an overflowing river. Thy power is not a terror to us—the shadow of Thy majesty does not fill us with dread—we see Thee in the blessed Saviour, and are made more than conquerors through Thy gracious power. Save us from self-trust and help us to know how good it is to put our confidence in our Mighty Father, and to be at rest because Thou art working for us. Thou art a covert from the storm—Thou art a sure defence—Thou art the salvation and joy of Thy people. O God the Father, O God the Son, O God the Holy Ghost, come to us, and make us holy, and wise, and strong. Amen.

The City Temple.

NOTES OF A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 6TH, 1870,

ON BEHALF OF THE IRISH EVANGELICAL SOCIETY.

ON ORGANIZATION, AGGRESSION, AND EDUCATION.

"He sent princes, and with them he sent Levites, and with them priests, and they taught in Judah and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."—2 CHRON. xvii. 7—9.

HERE we have organization, aggression, and education. We may make something useful of these points, now that we are entering upon a season of Christian anniversaries, looking at our work, and stimulating one another in the ways of the Lord. In the first place, let us say a word about organization. The scheme which is outlined in the text commends itself very strongly to my judgment, *because it was originated and directed by one man.* I believe in a committee of one. I should upset centralization by individuality. Once set Christian people to move and second resolutions, to propose amendments, and elaborate bye-laws, and the chances are they will forget the main work to which they have professedly set their hands. Ornamental committees will ruin any cause. Of course we must have organization, and to a certain extent we must have mutual criticism; but let these be kept at the lowest possible point, and let individual strength and devotedness be encouraged to the utmost. Nothing could tempt me to be secretary to some committees: the legislative pottering, the ridiculous fear of a hundred grim possibilities, the proud sagacity of some, and the

trembling timidity of others, would disqualify me for service. Get the right man, trust him, cheer him, give him to feel that great things are expected of him, and give him further to feel that his failures will be regarded with brotherly sympathy, and you will reduce the mischief of organization to a *minimum*, and carry up individuality to its most effective point. Committees are not masters, but co-operators. Directors are not employers, they are the brethren of the agents and missionaries whose labours they direct. We cannot, in working out our Christian plans, take the position which Jehoshaphat took in Judah, but we can work towards it. Don't let us be frightened by so-called tyranny: we are men, and men should never fear; we are Christians, and Christians lose their name when they lose their love. I should be thankful if we could do without societies, but this is impossible. Society should be another name for union, and union should be the harmony of strength. Society is not organized criticism, it is organized love. Committees are not debaters, they are servants working out a holy covenant. My fear is lest we lose our sense of personal responsibility when we join committees, as some men lose their consciences when they enter joint-stock companies. Let us remember that to fight over a resolution is not to preach the gospel, and to vote by ballot is a poor substitute for holding up the Cross. The Church did most when she knew least about formal organization, about minute-books, about committees, and debates. As far as possible, let every man be his own agent and his own missionary, and let him call in the aid of societies, not to lessen his own work, but to give it greater breadth and power. Organization is beset with dangers. The man who does next to nothing takes credit to himself for what has been done by the whole society: having given his threepenny piece and exasperated various officials, he says, with an air of charming hypocrisy, "We have raised £1,000 this year." This is not honest. It gives a false impression. It is one of the most mischievous of lies, full of self-flattery and deceit. The men who make such statements live on the reputation of others; they do not wear their own clothes; they do not stand on their own feet.

I am not advocating personal effort at the expense of true union. I say true union, because men may be really though not formally united. The union is in the work, not in the paper. Oneness of heart

is deeper and stronger than an alphabetical list of names. There is a great deal of disunion under apparent concentration. Union of heart will carry us through all dangers, union of names will but multiply our perils. I hold that the Church is one ; that the true unification of Christendom is already accomplished ; and that prayer for merely outward union is misdirected and unavailing.

II. The commission organized by Jehoshaphat was aggressive. The princes, the Levites, and the priests "went about through all the cities of Judah." It was an itinerant ministry. The men did not stand in one place and wait for the people to come to them ; they travelled ; they entered town after town, like an invading army, and so compassed all Judah. I am more and more persuaded that pastoral effort should be supplemented by evangelistic effort. A pastoral ministry must never be given up. It is right in principle, it is beneficent in influence. Still we must have a travelling ministry as well. The Gospel is nothing if not aggressive. It must challenge attention ; it must lift up its voice amid all competitors. It does not wait for battle—it begins it. Wherever there is darkness, its glory is poured on the gloomy scene ; wherever there is ignorance, it sheds the light of knowledge. A Church shut up within its own four walls, singing its own psalm, and enjoying its own edification, is not a Church of Christ : it is a slander, it is a travesty, it is an offence to the Spirit of the Cross.

It is commonly supposed that an inferior class of agents will do for evangelistic work. This is a mischievous error. The best man would not be out of place in the poorest district as a missionary. There is no room anywhere for inefficiency. The unfurnished workman is out of place everywhere. The pioneer should be a burning and a shining light. The herald should be a man of distinctive character.

There is an aggressiveness which does more harm than good. I do not believe in mere controversy. I would not make a direct attack upon any false system of religion. If you would overthrow error, teach truth. Don't debate—preach. Don't fight objections—proclaim the forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ. Don't fight religious duels—address the deepest wants of the human heart. My idea of aggression in

Ireland is not to send a hundred men to argue against the Pope's infallibility, or to abuse the ritual of the Romish Church. Let the Pope alone; let Ritualism alone; study the adaptation of the Gospel to human sin and sorrow, and preach it tenderly, with love and urgency, and you will do good. The sun does not say that he will not bring summer upon the earth until all weeds are pulled up; he brings in summer, notwithstanding the weeds. Our first work is not argument against error, but the preaching of affirmative doctrine. There are two ways of making aggression—one which means retaliation, defence, malice; another which means enlightenment, sympathy, redemption. Ireland needs the latter. The most considerate, tender, and delicate method of work is alone permissible in such a country as Ireland. We don't want mere anti-Romanism, we want the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Of course it is needful to know the whole ground; it is well to be prepared to meet special difficulties; times do arise when we must show our competency to discuss knotty questions in divinity, and to turn certain controversial weapons upon those who use them; but looking at the broad question of Christian aggression in Ireland, let us first of all and best of all show the one way of salvation through Jesus Christ, the blessed and mighty Saviour of the world.

There never was such an opening for aggression of this kind as there is to-day in Ireland. The set time to favour her is come. She is commencing a new volume of her tumultuous and romantic history. She is looking about for definitions and illustrations of voluntaryism, and we must supply them. Voluntaryism has been thought to be the crotchet of a few; we must prove it to be a law of God. Hitherto it has been regarded as a motto upon sectarian banners; we must show that it is the superscription alike of the Cross and the Throne. It is not enough to take down a church, we must set one up. The work of destruction is only half a work. He is a poor gardener who merely roots out the weeds. We have now to plough and to sow in Ireland; and by and by we shall have a season of reaping, and a long day of special joy. We have had during the year thirty-one agents in Ireland —shall we make them into a hundred? This would be one of the best evidences of our thankfulness that everything like humiliating ascendancy has been overthrown; and, apart from some such evidence, we

may be chargeable with incompleteness of service in the work of reformation. Shall we raise a fund of £5,000, as a thank-offering and a pledge? This would show how intense is our Protestantism, and how beneficent is our Christianity. To raise £5,000, as a thank-offering, would have a happy effect upon all classes of Christian labourers in Ireland; it would illustrate voluntaryism, it would explain Protestantism, it would extend the sway of truth. Let this be the year of aggression—and let the aggression be not mere wordy controversy, but a simple, earnest, valiant testimony for Jesus Christ.

III. The commission which Jehoshaphat sent into the cities of Judah was *educational*. Those who were sent took with them the book of the law of the Lord, and taught the people. What was the consequence? "The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat." Religious teachers are better than armies. To magnify God is to take care of the nation. The humblest missionary may be as a mighty soldier, and the obscurest prayer-meeting may be as a tower of defence, high and strong. To my inexpressible grief I find certain persons anxious to legislate the Bible out of the way, or into some exceptional hour; I resent their efforts—I avoid their company. It is undoubtedly important to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic; but it is of infinitely higher consequence to teach the truth that saves the soul. It will be a dark day for England when the Bible is deposed to a secondary place in the education of her children. The Bible has played no mean part in the history of Britain; it may be uninspired, but it has inspired the noblest men that have made the England of to-day; it may be a repertory of superstitious tales, but it has broken the neck of oppression, and withered the arm of the tyrant; it may be beneath the attention of the "higher criticism," but it has set Britain upon the throne of the nations. And now it is proposed to *allow* it to be read at a special hour in the day, in the schools of England. This is progress backwards. This is putting out the light which has given us distinction—this is cutting down the bridge which has given us the lead of the world. One thing is certain; if the Bible be put into a corner in our day schools, we must give it higher honour in

other directions; Sunday-school teachers must be more intelligent and zealous—ministers must teach the vital truths of Christianity more constantly and convincingly—missionaries must be men of one book. I am not to be understood as expressing a fear that the Bible will be displaced; that cannot be; for a time it may seem to be so; God will take care of His testimony—not a little of it shall fail. Yet I am anxious that we should make the *most* of the Bible, and not the *least;* that it should advance with our love, and not prevail, in spite of our indifference; that professedly religious people should never be wanting in practical public devotion to the writings which have made them wise unto salvation. I would cheer the heart of every man whose school is illuminated by the presence of an open Bible. Your teaching will be found to be the best in the long run; the men you turn out will be the surest explanation and defence of your system; your ornamental work may be comparatively small, but your substantial work will abide for ever. I am hot with anger, when I think of ministers of the Gospel —the sworn servants of the Blessed Christ—being willing that the Bible should be excluded from the ordinary exercises of our day schools. It is enough that the mere politician should take this ground—that the Secularist (the man of one world, and that world all dust) should set himself against the Bible—but the Gospel minister, the man called of Christ to save the world, should never be found otherwise than seeking the Christian enlightenment of the youthful mind. As Christian Churches, as ministers of the Gospel, we have nothing to do with the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic; it is only because in connection with such studies we may find opportunity to inspire young minds with Christian truth that we are called upon as churches to take any part in day-school instruction.

The agents of Jehoshaphat took with them the book of the law of the Lord, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people. We must have a Biblical ministry. We need for Ireland, as for all the rest of the world, men who are mighty in the Scriptures. The battle is not ours, but God's. The weapons are not carnal, but spiritual. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth. The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. We have not to *make* a Bible, but to *expound* one.

We do not send out clever theorists, cunning reasoners, and sharp debaters; we send out men in whose hearts the word of Christ dwells richly, and to whom that word is the true strength and joy of life. If I might send a fraternal exhortation to the brethren in Ireland who work in connection with this Society, I should say, *Know your Bible thoroughly.* Keep to the record, prove your call and your work by the book of the law of the Lord. You have to cope with trained men, every crevice in your armour will be detected; logic, wit, sarcasm, will be employed against you; woe unto you if you go to the fight in your own strength. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, above all taking the shield of faith, and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

In connection with some advertisements I have seen the words, "No Irish need apply." Brethren, in preaching the great salvation, the Irish may apply. In telling of the fountain of life, the Irish may apply. In making offer of all the blessings of salvation the Irish may apply. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The reception of the Gospel by Irishmen would be followed by the happiest consequences, so far as reproduction is concerned. In preaching the love of God we want Irish enthusiasm, poetry, affection, fancy, and fervour. Others will not be wanting in erudition, in criticism, in logic; the Irish may help immensely by those characteristics which give them distinctiveness among the nations, their urgency, warmth, hopefulness, and courage, will find ample scope in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In pleading the cause of the Irish Evangelical Society, I have no scruples of conscience and no restraints of judgment. Ireland is ours; not a neighbour, but a *sister.* She is a jewel in the English crown; let us see that her want of lustre is not due to our neglect. Ireland is within easy reach, let not her nearness cause her to be overlooked. Ireland has a religion, let us see that it is not a degrading superstition.

Our ministerial friends in Ireland seem to me to have special claims upon our sympathy. They are not surrounded by the darkness of heathenism; but is there not a denser gloom than the night which covers the lands of idolatry? They are not far from the centre of government, but is there not a rebellion which Acts of Parliament are unable to subdue? They are in the midst of priests, but are all priests servants of the one Saviour? What is true of the Irish ministry, is also true in degree of the Irish Church. It is not easy to set yourself against the traditions, the customs, and the spirit of a people. To us, Protestantism is often a mere theory; to others it is a discipline, a brand, a cross. It is one thing to survey Romanism from a distance, it is another to breathe its very atmosphere. Brethren, our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be upheld, comforted, and strengthened by the Saviour, who knows your labour, and cares for all your care. You are amongst the true pacificators of Ireland. Your work does not bring with it immediately visible results, but in the end it will be seen that teachers and preachers of the living word are the true guardians and consolidators of liberty and progress.

Englishmen! let your sympathy be drawn out towards Ireland. She pleads with us to-night. Give her Christian truth, supply her households with Bibles, speak tenderly of her special difficulties, do not insult her traditions, preach the Gospel of the love of God, hold high the all-redeeming cross, and Ireland shall yet be, not in poetry, but in fact—

> "Great, glorious, and free,
> First flower of the land, first gem of the sea."

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 19th, 1870.

GREATER WITNESS THAN JOHN'S.

"I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."—John v. 36.

Men are often called upon to maintain their ground in society. Specially, if a man do anything very extraordinary, and so draw attention to the sphere of his operations, society will persistently raise the *personal* question; the man must give some account of himself—who is he? what are his claims? on what foundation does he stand? It is not an insignificant circumstance that men take deep interest in unusual manifestations of life; it is rather a sign of their high origin and great capacity. Is there any man who would not gladly increase his power, extend the volume of his being, and carry to a higher intensity his influence for good? This is the meaning of all study, and the end of all prayer. All truly directed life is an effort after God. Men may not always have the fact present to their minds; yet, on reflection, they will acknowledge that in proportion as they make sound progress in life they work according to divine impulse and divine law. And, in proportion

as they do so, they will occasion excitement and inquiry; perhaps, also, ungenerous criticism, and even malign action.

Strange as it may appear, this is even so. Men are not always satisfied with the instruments and methods which God adopts. They limit the Holy one of Israel; they appoint the chariots in which He shall make the circuit of the universe; and if, rejecting these human vehicles, He shall walk upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds the dust of His feet—if He pass by kings, and exalt mean men to His ministry, if he refuse the silver trumpet, and elect the ram's horn—there will be wonder and disappointment among those who are the victims of their own blind and boastful conceit.

This method of criticism reached, of course, its highest application in the case of Jesus Christ. It is very instructive, as well as very humiliating, to study the discussions which prevailed about His personality, His authority, the seals and certificates of His ministry. The Jews were the very impersonation of the official mind. The first thing to be settled was descent or authority. Apart from this, all else was without value. Their intellectual operations, however exact in moving from cause to effect, seemed to be altogether unable to move from effect to cause. They saw a lame man leaping with new-gotten strength, yet they did not care to found an argument on the fact; they saw diseased men bloom with recovered health; yet, when they turned to the great worker, their eyes were dimmed by a puzzled and even angry prejudice. That worker was only Mary's Son; He had a connection with Nazareth, which vitiated His prophetic lineage; or there was some other flaw in His great claim to be heard and followed.

Is not the same kind of criticism active in our own day? Are we not all, more or less, tempted to try men by some merely technical standard? Do we not care more for the paper than the life, and believe a man to be good because the paper says so; or believe him to be bad, because he has no paper to show? If the life of Jesus Christ should have wrought one result above another upon merely literary readers, it should have exposed the insanity of denying a divine origin to divine works. Let those who please demand the credentials of the sun; but be it our wisdom to believe that no testimony can be so convincing as his own splendid and impartial light. This is a matter which I would

urge as of great importance. If men be looking for technicality where they should be looking for life, they resemble thirsty travellers who will not drink of a well until they have read the faded inscription which tells how it come to be a well at all. What say you to such travellers? For many a day they have wandered along the dusty road; their lips are parched with thirst; yet, when they they come to a well of water, they ask who dug it? Who enclosed it? What families have drunk of it? Through what districts the water flows, or through what strata it rises? The questions may not be altogether without importance, but life is more important to all, and dying nature ignores every one of them, until its burning thirst has been quenched. Now, Jesus Christ was as a well of living water, and the men who were around him were thirsty; yet those men put their small questions, and started their small objections, it being of more importance that their notions should be satisfied than that their lives should be saved; and, blame them as we may, they were not the only people who have sacrificed the living present on the altar of a dead routine, or rejected a spiritual Saviour because He was not also a temporal king.

Every man, then, it would appear, is asked for his testimonials. It was the custom of the world, and Jesus Christ must feel its influence. Large testimonials were supposed to be valuable, but in the progress of opinion it has been found that a man must be his own testimonial if he is to establish himself as a fact in the world. By this is meant that a man must not only *say*, but *do;* the earnest heart must express itself in the noble action, and the final appeal must be—"Believe me for the very works' sake."

Jesus Christ said, "I have greater witness than that of John." Let us understand this point. Jesus Christ does not despise the testimony of good men, nor does He teach His servants to do so. "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of me is true . . . . He was a burning and a shining light." No man is at liberty to despise the opinion of good men. That opinion should be prized on every ground, but specially as a stimulant to a still higher life. The good man's word of encouragement helps us many a time to recover heart when going up the hills of hard duty, and is often to us as a word immediately from God. At the same time testi-

monials are also often as the preface to a book ; the preface may be good, but the book must stand upon its own merits. When the preface written by a friendly patron is too highflown, the disadvantage accrues not to himself but to the young author in whose interest it was mistakenly written. There are men in England to-day who would be rich for ever, if they could live upon testimonials. Their testimonials are their greatest hindrances. Modest men shrink from the very idea of assisting persons whose pedestal is so immense and imposing ; consequently the great testimonial is but a millstone round the neck of its unfortunate possessor. Jesus Christ said, "I receive not testimony from man ;" Paul said, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment ;" John said, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." We should want to know what a man *is*, and not what is *said about him*, to see his work, and not to read his testimonial.

We are warranted in saying so by the words of the text, "the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." This was not the only time that the same doctrine was laid down by Jesus Christ. "When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another ? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." My object in calling attention to this text is to enforce the doctrine that, *both in personal and ecclesiastical life, the grand and final appeal as to authority, is to works.* The moral quality of the worker will be shown in his whole conduct and service among men. There may, in some instances, be crafty, and even successful simulation ; the holy word may be spoken by the unclean tongue ; the good deed may be attempted by the double-working hand ; but all this rather confirms the doctrine than opposes it, for no man would make base coin but for the value of the true metal.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to detain you for a moment to say, that I am not maintaining the doctrine of salvation by works ; there is no

such salvation that I am aware of, any more than there is navigation in sand, or pedestrianism on the sea. I refuse to regard salvation by works other than as a contradiction in terms, and I put it in this strong way, that in a sentence I may have done with the suggestion once for all. A man's testimony, as a professed servant of God, is to be found in his works. Let a man prove his salvation by his holiness. If a man should say that God sent him, let him prove his mission by his life —having heard his word, we await his works.

Take the case of a Church. You profess to be divinely called, but what is the proof? Don't refer me to a long line of illustrious ministers, to a large and splendid sanctuary, or even to a dazzling subscription list. Are you felt in the neighbourhood to be a power for good? Do you visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction? Are you eyes to the blind and feet to the lame? Do the poor bless you, and those who are ready to perish hold you in grateful reverence? I do not ask if the trust-deed be orthodox, if the music be scientific if the seats be well let, if the congregation be genteel; I ask if Jesus Christ crucified be the inspiration of your labour, and Jesus Christ risen the source of your power?

If a man said he was eloquent, how would you judge him? By the number of books he had read, or by the number of schools he had attended? Certainly not. If he never moved you to tears, or compelled your consent to his reasoning, or excited you to enthusiasm, his pretension would be nothing but a barren name. On the other hand, there may be a man who has not read a book on eloquence, who could not give you a single canon in rhetoric, yet when he opens his mouth your attention is caught as by a spell, his strong, earnest, pathetic speech, though perhaps broken and inexact, carries everything before it. Do you hesitate to pronounce him an eloquent man? You judge by the "works,"—you believe him for the very works' sake, and you are unquestionably right. It would fail to convince you that he was an eloquent man, if he merely repeated the rules of Quintillian and of Isocrates or repeated from end to end the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero. You must hear the man speak. It is not enough that he pronounce keen criticisms on other speakers, showing what canons have been violated, and what vices have been set up; after all this, the man

must show his power to convince the judgment and captivate the heart and the fancy before you can yield him homage as a master of speech. Specially is this the case with the Christian minister. He may be unlearned, yet the might of God may be in him; he may blunder and stumble, yet a mysterious dignity may invest his whole service. On the other hand, with spotless character, with innumerable testimonials, with a status conspicuous and influential, he may be brought to the lowest dust of humiliation, and to the distress of the most ignominious failure. Oh, ministers of Jesus Christ—servants of the One Crown—what manner of qualification should be ours! We must have seals of our apostleship, and these we cannot have but as we labour in our blessed Master's spirit: applause we may win; a name we may make; but wood, hay, and stubble shall perish—only the true gold will be of use to us at last!

So there may be persons who question your standing as a Church; according to their notions, you are not a Church at all; your foundation is a swamp, your pedigree a broken chain. What do you answer? Prove your call by your works. Show that the love of Christ is the all-compelling power of your lives, and by holiness, patience, and charity set up a claim too strong to be overthrown, too lofty to be defiled. In the days that are coming we shall have much controversy on church questions. Rival ecclesiastical theories will be zealously and ably maintained. In view of this conflict, let me say that works will be the only satisfactory standard of appeal. Ecclesiastical mummeries must be crumbled and scattered to the winds. Artificialism must perish. Philanthropy alone will stand. The day will come when upholders of every church system will have to defend themselves by the argument of facts. *What have our principles compelled us to do?* Where are the proofs of our love? Where are the results of our voluntaryism? What light have we shed on the world? What sanctuaries have we built? Away with the theory that believes much and does nothing. Blessed are the men who are drawn towards self-sacrifice; the service that comes of love.

The appeal which Jesus Christ made on his own behalf is also the appeal which should be made on behalf of Christianity. There are two lights in which Christianity may be regarded: it may be looked at as classified in sectarian dogmas, and as upheld by any particular

course of argument; in general terms, it may become a subject of criticism. Treated in this manner, it has been alike the object of ridicule and reverence. On the other hand, Christianity may be tested by its results as a practical religion. Its history is before the world. What has Christianity done? It has greater testimony than the commendation of its deep scholars and eloquent preachers. It has opened prison doors, broken down bad governments, aided all good causes, lifted up trampled honour and virtue; it has saved men's souls, given men's lives higher elevation, changed death into a beneficent liberator, and turned the grave into the last step towards heaven; it has made selfish men benevolent, harsh men gentle, timid men heroic, and sad men happy; it has blessed the cause of freedom, succoured the efforts of charity, upheld the claims of peace; it demands to be judged by its fruits, and its demand is reasonable and ought to be irresistible. We are called to maintain a practical testimony, to give the emphatic and convincing answer of noble living. We have had enough of literary testimonial; we have done enough in the matter of the evidences; we are thankful to every author who has spoken one good word for the truth; now let the truth speak for itself, let the Christian be the best defence of Christianity, let the life of the servant commend the doctrine of the Lord. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Brethren, what if our testimonials, our diplomas, our certificates, be all burnt up and we have nothing to show but the smouldering ashes of an artificial life.

The argument which applies to Christianity applies also, of course, with equal effect, to the Bible. If the Bible is to be judged by its works, there is, happily, an end of controversy. What is the best reply to attacks upon the Bible? *Circulation.* When men say the Bible is not inspired—circulate it: when they charge upon it inability to address the spirit of the times—circulate it: when they say it has outlived the circumstances which called for it—circulate it! Circulation is the best argument. Let the Bible speak for itself; there is no

eloquence like its own; let it reveal itself in its own pure glory, not in the artificial flare of our commendation. The Bible must be its own vindicator. Not because our fathers believed in it; not because it has a romantic history; not because of priestly exhortation; but because of its own proved power to enlighten the mind, to bless the heart, to elevate life, and destroy the power of death, must the Bible be held first in our love and highest in our veneration. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil." What does the Bible bring forth? What of manhood? What of purity? What of hope? It must not be judged in detail: it must not have meanings forced upon it: it must be taken in its entirety: it must have free scope: it must be received into the heart—then we abide by the verdict!

Almighty God, help Thy servants to do the work which will bear witness of Thee: help them to work while it is called day, so that at eventide they may have peaceful and grateful recollections. May we be jealous about our purity; may our life be a sacrifice; may our speech be a call to heaven. We mourn our inconstancy, our feebleness, our ignorance; but how great is Thy mercy—greater than the sea, greater than the firmament,—truly it is past finding out! May our Christian name be a Christian reality, and our hope in Thee a light that shall make our whole life glorious! How rich in heavenly graces might our life have been, had we walked with God! We might have been princes in Thy house, whereas we are but as slaves, whose eyes are even towards the dust. Pardon us, blessed Father. Bind us to the Cross—give us hope in Thy dear Son. Amen.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 26th, 1870.

THE CHARACTER OF JACOB.

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."—Gen. xxxii. 24.

Any attempt to make Jacob a hero, or even a good man, at the time of his deception of his father, must fail. Few men ever sunk so far below the line of common honesty, not to say filial piety, and few men deserve such pungent and humiliating censure: not only was there deception of an old blind man, itself an unpardonably vile thing, but there was the most weakminded and petty cowardice in relation to a noble brother. At that time Jacob represented the very lowest quality of manhood; we can call him a man only by courtesy; while Esau, a venturous and kind-hearted child of nature, stands up as a prince, uncrowned indeed, but only so because a thief had robbed him of his crown. It is a bad thing that there should be thieves at all, but how much worse that they should hide their wickedness and practise their felony under any of those gentle names which should signify the sacredness and unity of human life. If thief be a man's only name, we can beware of him, and point out the designation as a public warning; but if to the name of thief he add the name of brother, he is doubly armed: we may not always be able

to tell where the brother ends and where the thief begins ; for even under the brother's smile there may lurk a felon's plot. When a man's enemies are those of his own household, the earth becomes very desolate and chilling, and the heart sinks into misanthropy, if not into practical atheism. As to Jacob's mother, surely no meaner woman ever lived ; not passionate, but calculating ; not flaring in a momentary rage, and then crying bitterly over her madness, but sitting apart silently meditating a plot, laying a thief's scheme, favouring a sleek, self-involved, heartless man, at the expense of a noble and even princely brother ; and then think of old, blind, dying Isaac, the victim of the woman who should have been eyes to the blind, who should have watched him day and night, lest any trouble should befall him ! Here are mother and son combined to rob a man who is about to be put into his grave. And this is not altogether an uncommon case. To-day there are persons who are practising on the weakness of dying friends, urging and teasing them to make disposition of their property, driving them with the whip of a pitiless and determined selfishness. Will such people have any enjoyment of the property so stolen ? Can they spend profitably the gold which they have wrung out of a dying hand ? Never ! It will go from them without advantage ; their wealth will be their poverty ; and in their own turn they will be robbed and laughed at. This is being done every day ; the schemer is being fastened in his own net ; and God's hook is thrust through the nose of the ravenous beast which fattens himself in the churchyard.

Altogether Jacob comes before the world with a very bad presence up to the time of stealing the patriarchal benediction. How God could have chosen such a man for any special purpose of honour, to set him at the head of a nation, and give him a name above all kings, has puzzled many a reader. The lot has always fallen upon Esau, yet God chose Jacob for His special blessing. How is this ? We can never find out, if we look at this case alone ; but if we take a wide view of human history we shall discover that God has always chosen the weak and the lost as instruments of blessing in His wondrous ministry. He has never taken what would be generally considered the best specimens of humanity ; He has often set the younger before the elder, He has left

the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and gone after one that was lost; He has passed by Jerusalem, and set His love upon Nazareth; and when He elected a rock for His Church, it was not John, but Peter, to whom the revelation was made. All this is strange, and yet it is clearly God's method; and surely we may see the germ of the redemptive idea in this habit of working. If God had begun anywhere but at the very lowest depth, His work would have been incomplete; it would have been a kind of work which any man would have attempted; but to begin with the worst, to set Jacob above Esau, to prefer Peter to John, to select the bruised reed rather than the great strong tree, was to adopt a method which never could have been conceived but by infinite wisdom and love. In the meantime, then, I take my stand here, because I find a principle which reaches over all difficulty, and gives promise of such a consummation of human history as would otherwise be impossible. I must always think kindly of Esau; it would be a poor world but for such men; they give one stimulus and health, carrying one away from the scheming and tricky city to the uplands, the moors, and the forests, to the solemn minsters of nature, where the sweet hymn never ceases, and where the altar fire is never quenched. I shall not think well of Jacob, because he was a cold, selfish, wicked calculator; yet, on the other hand, if such men were excluded from God's love, and if God chose only the finest examples of human nature, how many of us would fall short of heaven! Then, think how complete is God's work—if the worst and weakest can be so far recovered as to lie at the very foundation, who can tell how splendid will be *their* glory, who will be set as the top stones and pinnacles of the temple?

The one point to which I wish to direct attention is to be found in the history of the wonderful night spoken of in the text. We do not find that Jacob wasatonce pro moted, without scourging and sorrow, to his high place; on the other hand, we do find that he was afflicted and debased—that, as a wanderer and a stranger, he underwent a most humiliating discipline, and that on this night his old and wretched past was displaced by a new name and a new hope. It is important to dwell upon this fact, lest any man should imagine that treachery and selfishness are the high road to prosperity and honour. Never! The whole

universe fights against the bad man; God never made a throne for the traitor; His government is set for ever against all false rule; and even in the case of Jacob there are traces not to be mistaken of the godly chastisement whereby all sonship is tried and purified. It was not to be expected that the felony which had been perpetrated upon Esau could be forgotten as if it had never taken place. Observe this very closely, if you please. Jacob does not justify himself; he does not take his stand upon right; he does not plead Divine compulsion. He calls himself Esau's servant; he trembles in great alarm when he hears that Esau is approaching him at the head of four hundred men; he addresses God in the language of the uttermost self-abasement, and altogether conducts himself as a man who was consciously in the wrong, and who had no hope but in mercy, alike human and divine. Thus the eternal law of retribution was magnified; the scourge always follows sin, and the bad man has always to lick the dust. On the human side, then, there was humiliation, there was shame, there was fear, there was self-abhorrence; but what shall be said of the Divine side, which was screened by the darkness of the night, when Jacob wrestled in agony with the unnamed Man? Now, there must be such a night in every human life, and that is the burden of my sermon—a night in which the sinful past shall go down for ever into the depths of unfathomable waters. It must come to this, if the sinner is to have a second beginning in life: there must be a lonely and agonising conflict with God. We can get some notion of the results of a high spiritual battle by thinking of changes that take place in the lower circles of experience. We say of such and such a man, "He has not been the same person since he lost his son, or his fortune, or since he passed through a long and terrible affliction." His very visage may have been changed, his voice may have been softened, his way of looking at things and talking about things is quite new—much higher, exceedingly refined; and it is literally true that he is "not the same person;" all the lines upon his face are deepened, his eye is brightened or dimmed, as the case may be; and his talk about men is marked by a very gentle charity, or an elevated magnanimity. This was not his old method; perhaps he was proud, perhaps covetous, perhaps censorious, but his dead self has been buried, and he walks among men in newness and betterness of life. Are we not conscious of something of this

in our own experience? A great change has passed upon our spirit, our bearing, our language, so that persons who see us after long separation wonder at the change. All this gives us a hint of what happened in this night of Jacob's history. We cannot tell all the meaning of this "wrestling;" it was *long*, even "until the breaking of the day;" it was *desperate*, for not until the Man put the hollow of his thigh out of joint did Jacob relax his determined grasp; it was *successful*, for the old name Jacob, the supplanter, was changed to Israel, the man who prevails with God.

Judging ourselves by ourselves, one man may claim to be Esau, and another may be unanimously regarded as a scheming and treacherous Jacob; but bringing ourselves to the bar of Divine righteousness, we lose all those distinctions which social standards may permit, and stand before it condemned with unutterable condemnation. In God's judgment there are no fine shades of moral distinction; the human heart has fallen from the purity in which He created it, and man now lies in the brokenness and putrescence of mortal apostasy. The doctrine taught by the inspired writings, and confirmed by universal experience, is, distinctly, that sin cannot be thrown off by the sinner at all, and that life can be reconstructed only after seeing God face to face, as it were, and wrestling mightily with His great power and love. The first conviction that must be wrought in the sinner's mind is, that he must become liberated from the dead and pestilent past; so long as he imagines that perhaps he can charm that past into life, and meet God on equal terms, he proves that he is unprepared to receive the redemption which has been offered to a lost world. If Jacob had felt that he had one claim upon Esau, he might have fought with some hope of success, but it was because he felt himself utterly undone that he assumed the abasement which his treachery justly demanded of him. The same doctrine holds good on the wide ground of our relationship to God. If there be in us a conviction, however mixed with self-reproach, that we are not utterly unworthy of complacent recognition at the hands of God, we shall never know the prostration and agony which precede the final lifting up and immortal blessedness which comes of God's love. Nor is this hard in the sense of being unjust. If a branch could cut itself off the vine, would it be harsh in the vine to say

to it, "You cannot bear fruit of yourself"? When a man stands convicted of the highest crime known to the law, is he in a position to debate with the judge respecting some supposed point of excellence in his character? The Pharisee may have an easy process to go through in the temple, and the publican a very hard one; but it is the ease which gains nothing, and the hardness which leads up to heaven.

I don't know that we are straining the purpose of either narrative by setting the narrative of Nicodemus alongside this narrative of Jacob. Both men wrestled with the Lord Jesus; both men wrestled by night; and the great lesson taught in both cases is, that only by such wrestling can any man begin his life over again in the best sense. When Jesus Christ wounds, it is that He may heal; and when He strips man of every faded and tattered garment, it is that He may clothe them with better raiment. When a man has been undergoing a great conflict of the heart, and undergoing it in secrecy, he may for a time be utterly emaciated, but in truth he is getting upon the right way, and out of his weakness there shall come sufficient and abiding strength.

Fix the mind upon the idea that in every human life there must be a night of wrestling spent with God before there can be a morning of happy reconciliation with men. What a morning followed Jacob's wrestling! Hear what was done, and see how the characteristics of each brother are brought out: "And he (Jacob) passed over, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother; and Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." What a naturalness there was in Esau! It seems as though the natural nobility was better than the piety of others, just as we have sometimes seen that fruit which has grown wild has been in some respects finer than fruit grown under the advantage of culture. I delight to think of that morning as a type of the time that shall come upon families and nations. Men cannot spend long nights of conflict with God without having social kindliness and blessed influence in the morning. The great battle is a divine one. When man is right with God he will be right with his fellow-men; but until he has prevailed in heaven he will never have much power or rest on earth. This reminds us, as we

are often reminded, how deeply *religious* are all the foundations and all the nobler modes of human life. Our life is not a question of details or of accident; it is not an intermingling of unrelated chances; it has a centre, a law, a course of development; and nothing carries with it higher rationality than the doctrine that rightness with God is the spring of all other rightness. When we know that society has charges against us, or that any human being, how weak or lowly soever, can justly accuse us of wrong-doing, we can become qualified for the occasion only by deep and prolonged communion with God. Otherwise, we shall approach the charge on a low moral level; we shall carry with us selfish suggestions, and meet the accusation in a spirit of proud and vengeful criticism; but when come from a night spent in wrestling with the Man who is as God to us, we shall descend upon the occasion with all heavenliness of charity, and accept our just humiliation as the pledge of new and better standing. Surely we should live a noble and beautiful life, if we could come to every duty as men who have been refined in God's sanctuary; if between all the separate acts of our life we could interpose an interview with God, the whole life would be as a chainwork of fine gold. Blessed are they who, being sinful, go to Jesus Christ by night, and wrestle with Him for the blessing of forgiveness and the honour of a new name: when the day breaks it will be beautiful, with a light above the brightness of the sun.

The Prayer.

Blessed and gracious God, we thank Thee for Thy many wonderful ways of training human life. Thou knowest all that is special in us, and all that is special in our destiny. Do Thou mercifully command Thy blessing so to rest upon us as to destroy all evil, and give strength and dominion to all that is like Thyself. Thou didst make of Jacob an illustrious servant in Thy kingdom; Thou didst help him to overcome his moral weakness, his shameful decrepitude and selfishness; do Thou be pleased likewise so to purify us by Thy Holy Spirit, and ennoble us by Thy blessed grace, as to enter into the new-creatureship which is

offered to all men in Christ Jesus. We would cast off the old man with his deeds, and put on the holy strength and beauty of the Adam who came to redeem us and restore in our souls the glory of Thine own image. Save us from being content with condemning the treachery of other men; inspire us with the love of holiness that will save our hearts from all evil motives and desires, and that will express itself in our lives with a lustre that will convince all men that our life is hidden in God and in His blessed Son. Save us, too, we beseech Thee, from such admiration of natural nobleness as shall lead us to form false estimates of our spiritual state before God. We have applauded much in the character of Esau; lead us to know that every character is worthless that is not built upon the righteousness of Christ's love, and that does not aspire after the fulness of Thine own perfection. That our hearts may be without stain, may our hearts be pure in Thy sight; clothe us with the garments of salvation, and make us beautiful as the children of the King. Wrestle with us, O Thou who wast known unto Jacob as the Angel-Man! Make us importunate, and then reward our importunity with a new nature and a new name. We remember our treacheries; we have done manifold evil to our brethren; we have put forth our hand to that which was not our own, and our hearts have been filled with bitterness and mortal distress. Come to us to show the way of salvation, and enable us to make such reparation to the brothers whom we have wronged as will show how deep is our penitence and how poignant is our self-reproach.

Special Note.—From many quarters we have been urged to enlarge *The City Temple* into a penny weekly newspaper—religious, political, and literary. We are inclined to look at the suggestion practically. What we do shall be done promptly. We are assured on every hand that there is a most favourable opening for such a paper. Will our readers help us? Will each of them get us six subscribers? If so, the paper would begin as a great success. The present name will be retained; the weekly sermon will be published; and every effort made to satisfy the reasonable wishes of our supporters. If the paper appear, it may be had of all news-agents and booksellers throughout the country.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 2nd, 1870.

MOSES AND THE LAMB.

The words which have been chosen as the text are—*Moses and the Lamb.* They occur in the 15th chapter of the Book of Revelation, and 3rd verse—

"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

This is a marvellous conjunction of names. The song sung by the saints who overcame is a song of the human and divine; a song of the servant and the Son; and it may be worth our while to trace, so far as we may be able, this remarkable and even startling conjunction. It is not proposed to go in quest of remote analogies or resemblances, or to force meanings upon passages contrary to their plain import. We know that Moses was very meek above all men upon the earth, and that Jesus Christ was meek and lowly in heart. We know that Moses was the deliverer of Israel, and that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer of the world; and we are not prepared to deny that many just and impressive analogies might be wrought out by comparing the work of Moses in Egypt and the wilderness with the work of Christ among men; there is undoubtedly abundant scope for legitimate exercise of sanctified genius in giving spiritual and Christian interpretations to many points in the eventful ministry of Moses; and if I do not avail myself of the goodly stores which may be found in such interpretations, it is because I have in view a task which is sufficiently comprehensive to engage our attention during the whole time which we occupy on these occasions.

Let me, then, read in order a set of passages which will indicate the ground which it is intended to traverse :—

"Pharaoh charged all the people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river."

"Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

"This Moses whom they refused . . . . the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer."

"The Stone which the builders refused the same has become the head-stone of the corner."

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

"They sing the song of Moses . . . . and the Lamb."

I.

The first remark that occurs upon reading these is that the highest human powers are quite unable to baffle the schemes of God. Pharaoh and Herod were intent on murder. Bad kings have always been afraid of young life; they have never been the friends of intelligent and progressive manhood. History convicts them of the direst crimes which human wickedness can perpetrate. Their short but never easy method has been summed up in the decree, *Slay all who threaten you;* throw them into the river—kill them with the edge of the sword! May not we learn something from this ruthless method of upholding bad purposes? If wicked men have been afraid of young life, is there not a power in young life which may be trained to the highest uses? Ought we to be indifferent when kings have been struck with mortal terror? Where they have seen vengeance, ought not we to see energy that should be sanctified? Where they have proposed murder, ought not we to propose education? Train your children as if God had called them to a special ministry; do not set up a low standard of possibility; not that you are to over-tax their powers, or encourage them in unnatural conceit; set before them the highest examples, animate them by the noblest considerations, point out the road which lies towards heaven, bless them in every endeavour to lighten human misery, and work

diligently, as God may put opportunities in your way; and you will help to train a race of men before whom all throned evil and all sceptered terror shall quake, and perish in unpitied and irrecoverable ruin.

The devil gives ungracious welcome to every child that carries the faintest sign of moral nobility or special destiny. Moses was laid upon the river; the Lamb was pursued by the sword of Herod. It was a hard beginning, but the world has had history enough now to know that hard beginnings are the winters out of which spring is quickened, and by which summer is enriched and glorified.

Have any of you had a hard beginning? Look at Moses and the Lamb! Write me a list of men who have ever done anything remarkable for the world, whose beginning was bright, and full of joy, and I will engage to throw it into insignificance, by a list long, illustrious, and imperishable, of men who have been cradled in the manger, exposed on the river, pursued in early life by unkindness, by malice, and by all uncharitableness which darkens in the direction of murder itself.

II.

"This Moses, whom they refused, the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer. . . . . The Stone which the builders refused, the same is become the Head-stone of the corner."

Here we come to a different class of opponents and enemies, but to an opposition, if possible, more malignant and wicked. When a man's enemies are they of his own household, he has reached almost the last trial of his faith and patience. When David's equal, and guide, and acquaintance, with whom he took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company, reproached him, and magnified himself against him, David's heart failed, and he spake bitterly with his tongue. Jesus Christ came unto His own, and His own received Him not; He was in the world, and the world was made by Him; and the world knew Him not. No man received His testimony. He was as a king of whom his own citizens said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Yet God hath set this stone of stumbling and this rock of offence as the Head of the corner, and on Him the spiritual house is established for ever.

Very wonderful is God's method of electing and calling men to His service; so wonderful as to throw into confusion all human probabilities and calculations. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. He destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent; he chooses base things of the world, and things which are despised; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. By the foolish things of the world He confounds the wise; and by the weak things of the world He confounds the things which are mighty. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!

God's election fell not upon Eliab, but upon David, the keeper of sheep; He called Elisha from the plough, and set Amos, the herdman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, to prophesy unto Israel. He makes the first last, and the last first!

Men are confounded when probabilities are upset, and when their inductions from what they mistake for facts are contradicted by unexpected events. Men talk about cause and effect; they say that the cause must be equal to the effect; they read life, and work in life in the light of theories which have a good deal to recommend them; yet God often baffles them—often calls the unlikeliest men to the front—often gives the race to the slow, and the battle to the weak—and gathers the whole kingdom of heaven around a little child, as its best earthly type and illustration. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

III.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

Here the names of Moses and the Lamb are brought into conjunction by Jesus Christ Himself. No sign of inferiority is attached to Moses. There is nothing in the terms of the conjunction to denote inequality. Is Jesus Christ *degraded* by such a remarkable association? Ours is a poor reverence—in fact only a drivelling superstition—if we tremble lest Christ's honour be divided.

Was not the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness a Divine

arrangement? Is not the apparent insignificance and contemptibleness of the device quite consistent with God's method of doing His work? It was not the scheme of Moses; it was not the proposition of the suffering Israelites; it was the direct command of God, and, therefore, not unworthy of being spoken of in illustration of the Great Redemption.

But I wish to say more than this—is not every *human* attempt to recover and heal the world, a movement *in the direction of the Christian redemption?* Men are not always aware of the full significance of their work. Every man who studies and toils that he may alleviate human suffering, is moving in the line of Divine beneficence. He may not *see* all that he is doing; it may be an unconscious, and in fact an unintentional movement, yet not the less certain, and not the less a basis of appeal to himself on higher concerns. God's argument with men regarding the recovery and sanctification of their souls is strengthened and made logically irresistible, by their own efforts in the lower region of healing, and education, and satisfaction. The great text now before us may be expanded so as to embrace all those efforts. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; as physicians seek healing virtue in plants and minerals; as parents strain their affections and their outward resources for the advantage of their suffering children; as philanthropists make great efforts to better the state of society; as human life, in its best condition, is a continued attempt to raise and bless the world, EVEN SO is the lifting up of the Son of man, the whole scheme of Divine mediation, the great, the transcendent expression of Divine love, the all-inclusive and sublime consummation of all your human processes—and if you did but understand your own care about the welfare of the world, you would see in it a sign of God's infinite love as shown in the lifting up of the Son of man.

In this union of the names of Moses and the Lamb you have a hint of the co-operation of the human and the Divine, which should help to an understanding of the great special work which is entirely of God, and cannot be shared by men. In all our attempts to do good, though they be divinely suggested, we are but working with broken faculties, and our sinfulness mars the beauty of our ideals: we cannot work with wholeheartedness and purity; we struggle and blunder; we become discouraged and weary—but God works from the other end. With

infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite love, he answers the cry of the heart, and reveals the Cross bearing His own Son, as the great end towards which we have been moving, but which of ourselves we could never have attained.

IV.

"The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Here we have at once a parallel and a contrast—a parallel in that law and grace are both of God, and a contrast in that while law came by the servant, grace and truth came by the Son. Yet grace is not lawless, nor is truth an unregulated sentiment. We could never have known grace had we not first known law; nor could we, as sinful men, ever have come to the spirituality of truth, but through the definiteness and severity of commandment. In a very important sense we have to begin with Moses, and to traverse the initial and preparatory stages of the Old Testament; the Old Testament and the New are yet to be to us as Moses and the Lamb. They are distinct, yet united; and as Jesus Christ Himself began at Moses and all the prophets, and found in all the Scriptures things concerning Himself, so we may find in the ancient records of inspiration the law which, unchanging as the Lawgiver, is yet carried to fulness of grace and truth in the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

There is a difference between law and grace, and law and truth, which need not be pointed out at great length in this connection, as the one object of our discourse does not require any collateral discussion. It is enough for us to lay hold of the fact that in the working out of His purpose God sent us a schoolmaster, to conduct us through a severe yet invigorating discipline, that we might be prepared to enter upon the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Children can understand a command when they cannot understand the reason on which it is based; they can obey the *law*, when they cannot explain the *truth;* they can walk by the *letter* when they cannot comprehend the *spirit.* Yet there comes a time in their growth, if they grow according to the Divine law, when, under the sternness of the commandment they see the tender purpose of grace, and through the hardness of the letter they see the

brightness and beauty of truth. Jesus Christ, then, did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; He did not depose Moses and the prophets, but gave them exceeding honour; He did not relax the law of the seasons, yet showed that in Himself alone came the bloom and splendour of eternal summer.

It is true, blessedly true, that we are not under the law, but under grace; yet I question whether any man can be under grace until he has first been under law; and I deny that any man who is in grace can make light of law; on the contrary, he will see in law the first motion of the Divine love which culminated in the grace of Jesus Christ.

If any man is carrying the law as a burden, which prevents his coming to the gospel, he is abusing the law; and if any man says that because he is under grace he can therefore dispense with the law, he is dishonouring grace. Brethren, being under grace, we are the servants of righteousness,—we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

V.

"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

Wonderful is the song of Moses and the Lamb—the song of the human and the divine—the song of law perfected in grace—the song of earth and heaven. How *human nature* is thereby glorified,—apostate, ruined, human nature associated with the Lamb in the song of heaven! Christianity, instead of depreciating human nature, exalts it,—*it is only in Christianity that we see the real worth of human nature.* If a man would know what he really is, and what he may become, let him look, not at himself, but at Jesus Christ. Was not man made in the image and likeness of God? True, he is a fallen creature; yet in his fall he attests his origin—there is not a fragment of the shattered temple which does not prove that its builder and maker was God.

They are not two distinct songs; the song is one and the same. Nor is the Lamb dishonoured by being thus associated with the great representative of the human race; it is his own doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! It is not the song of Peter and the Lamb, though Peter was the first Christian disciple; it is not the song of John and the Lamb,

though John pointed out the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. It is the song of *Moses* and the Lamb—the Old Testament and the New are one; the Law and the Gospel are one. From the beginning to the end the Divine dispensations are one; God's love, as shown in Jesus Christ, was not a merely chronological development. From eternity to eternity God is love—now thundering on the mount that burned with fire, now entreating upon Mount Zion; now smiting the nations with the rod of destruction, and now sending the Gospel to every creature; now commanding the pestilence to make havoc in the earth, and now causing the sun to arise with healing in his wings. God's love has many servants; Moses, Elias, and Jesus are to us separate names; are they not, viewed from an earthly point, as Faith, Hope, and Charity?—all God's gifts, yet the last, and best, and greatest is Jesus.

We have seen Moses and the Lamb persecuted by kings; we have seen Moses and the Lamb refused of their brethren; we have seen Moses and the Lamb associated in lifting up the standard of salvation; we have seen Moses and the Lamb as representing the Law and the Gospel; we have seen Moses and the Lamb as the subjects of heavenly song. From this conjunction, let us learn at once how condescending is the majesty of God, and how majestic is the nature of man.

The City Temple.

A PARABLE,

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 9th, 1870.

VIEWS OF HUMAN LIFE.

"What is your life?"—James iv. 14.

You know the joys of early morning in May—morning in the country which lies far away from the blight of city smoke; only in such country can Morning show herself as she really is; in other places she is veiled and disguised, as if the spirit of fear had laid hold upon her, or as if her delicacy shrunk from the tumult and noisomeness of city life. Not long ago I saw Morning in her fullest beauty; she smiled upon the hills, and shed her blessing on the valleys like a priestess of the Most High God; orchards clothed with garments of many colours, fields rich with luxuriant pasture, gardens fragrant with many flowers, were all within sight; and as for the pure, healing, invigorating air, there was quite a busy population thronging its broad, free thoroughfares; birds were curving and darting in all directions, singing and chirping as they went their early errands; winged insects were intent on pursuits with which no stranger might intermeddle; from every tree there sounded a hymn not less touching because often abrupt and always incomplete; lambs were gambolling, and even soberer cattle were not indisposed to return to the innocent follies of their youth. The whole scene had upon it the bloom of hope; the most decrepit life could hardly have resisted the spell of its renewing power; it was a morning that symbolised Resurrection and Immortality.

Standing on a hill-top a youth approached me, and soon showed that he was of a dreamy, contemplative, idealistic cast of mind; he had a world of fancies quite his own; he read messages on the green trees,

and heard calls in the music of birds, which were concealed from duller men. From the excitement of his face I correctly inferred that his nerves often had the upper hand of him : he was all motion : there was life all over him so to speak, hence he was afflicted with a sensibility which occasioned him many a pain beyond the common lot of men. Notwithstanding this excitableness it is quite correct to describe his cast of mind as visionary; extremes met; he was as one who trembled in a dream. To him I ventured to put the inquiry—"What is life,—what does it seem like to you?" Instantly he answered, looking with most intelligent appreciation upon the enchanting vernal scene, "*This* is life, sir—this is life; brightness, beauty, music, promise—*this* is life!" For a moment I paused, as if unable to read his riddle, but in reality because I did not wish to trouble the happy dream of his young heart. He regarded my silence as a sign of inability to tell the meaning of his figure, and, to help me, he pointed to a spring in the hill-side: the water was pure, cool, clear as crystal, and as it sparkled it seemed to say to the sun, "You and I will make this day happy!" and then it streamed away over a stony road, to find the sea which lures all waters to itself. The youth looked upon the springing water as upon a friend, and heard in its minor music much of benediction; he dipped his hand into the pool, and threw the water from him, admiring the spangles which it made in the sun, and then he watched the descending streamlet; again he exclaimed, "Sir, *this* is life!" Like himself, I looked at the rill, and the joy which his contagious cheerfulness quickened in me became a pain, for I saw on how rough a course the glittering and unsuspecting stream had entered. The riddle was unsolved. The stream was but a hint, not an interpretation. Nor could I blame my companion; for what did he know of life—was he not as one who has no yesterdays, and whose soul lives in the haze and mystery of the future? He bade me *listen to the silence;* he pointed out the birds, and called them by name; he diverted a thread of the stream towards a clump of half-opened primroses; and then we fell into silence again, and listened to the soothing hum of the morning. I took no note of the duration of our silence; but I remember with how startling an energy it was broken.

"Listen!" exclaimed the youth.

"What hear you?" he then inquired, in a subdued, but still earnest voice.

"A noise, as of distant trumpeting," said I, in a half doubtful tone.

"And what does it mean?" said he, laying his hand gently upon mine; "what does it *mean?* Think of your own riddle, and there's the answer!"

"You puzzle me," said I; "what connection is there between my

riddle and that sound? My riddle is, 'What is life?' and *that* is the sound of a musical instrument."

"Ha, ha!" said he, "the enigmatist requires an interpreter. Why, sir," he continued, "you must put one thing to another, and let your imagination give wings to your logic: that is the sound of a trumpet; it is a sound that means battle, and battle means victory; shut your eyes, and you will see all my meaning with the eyes of your mind—I see," he eagerly continued, "a hundred banners high in the sunshine, and on their silken surface there are letters of gold. I see thousands upon thousands of spears, bright as if they had been dipped in lightning; I hear men talking to one another of spoil, and victory, and honour;—Oh, sir, *that*—strength, joy, conquest—that is life!"

Still we did not understand one another fully; for the youth and I seemed to be living in different worlds. Instead of finding in him the simplicity of young life, I found a manner of expression almost romantic; it would have been affectation, if it had been found alone; but as it was in perfect consistency with all the other features of his character, it was felt to be something deeper and better than a mere conceit. As we wandered slowly down the hill I was well aware of many an inquiring glance being directed to me by my companion. I thought, too, that perhaps my eccentric interlocutor was secretly rejoicing that he had kept the enigmatist at bay; but opportunity of testing the case was lost by the unexpected appearance of a maiden, who seemed to embody the very spirit of the lovely Morning. On her brow was the seal of wisdom, in her carriage there was the fearlessness of innocence, and about her altogether there was the all-revealing luminousness which moral reptiles dread and avoid. She hailed my companion with girlish frankness, and, with something like banter of tone, she addressed him.

"And how have things looked this morning?" said she; "come, brother, give me a straightforward answer, for once;" and then she looked at me, and her look was an explanation.

"We have been trying to answer a riddle," said I, "and if you will pardon me, I will venture to say that your brother's replies have been somewhat figurative."

She turned upon me an expression of countenance which plainly said, "I know it all;" and then added, interrogatively, "a *riddle?*"

"Yes," said I, "and, if you please, I will put it to yourself—What is life?" I cannot easily forget the penetration and brightness of her look, as she stood in reflective silence; she took but a moment to see through the mystery, and then she answered, "'What is life?' Why, it is A HOPE."

II.

Summer noonday makes one glad of the shade of a great rock or a friendly tree. The sun is a fierce opponent when he strikes from his highest point; how gladly then do we hasten to the shadow, and let the burning conqueror have everything his own way! Within a most hospitable shadow I met a group of hard-working men taking their mid-day rest, and talking to one another about the unexpected turns and difficulties of life. They were men of mature years, just past their prime, yet strong in body and clear in mind. They did not talk about life in a bookish manner, nor did they talk about it off-handedly, but with mingled sobriety and humour, which made their homely talk quaintly pathetic.

"Five-and-twenty years ago," said one of them, "I never thought I should have been where I am now."

"Five-and-twenty years ago," said another, "I was as wild a youth as ever lived, going headlong to the gallows; and I should have gone too, but for something I cannot talk about."

"Five-and-twenty years!" said a third, musingly—"why I would not for the world go through the next five-and-twenty years as I have gone through the last."

"Very likely not," a serious man rejoined; "but life comes to us a day at a time; we never have to open two gates at once, and that's how we bear so much."

"Two gates at once!" the former speaker retorted, in a tone of surprise—"some of us seem to have to open forty gates at once, and we can find neither the handle nor the key."

"That's true," a new voice replied; "it seems to me there's nothing but gates to open, and the gates seem to have made up their minds not to be opened."

"It's a puzzle, isn't it?" another inquired, giving his head a general turn, so as to address the question to everybody in the group. "I call it a puzzle," he continued; "what with trying to keep body and soul together, bringing up your children—God bless them!—giving them a bit of schooling, and going about from one place to another seeking work, it seems to me we are always beginning and never ending; we turn up just where we began."

This was unanimously declared to be a sensible opinion; so the speaker felt encouraged to proceed.

"Just like my little girl, bless her. She has given us more trouble and more joy than all the other children put together; for we never thought we could rear her. Why, bless you, for three weeks at a time I have never had my clothes off ——"

"That's not the subject, friend," said the man who had confessed that he would have gone headlong to the gallows but for something he couldn't talk about; and there was nothing ungentle in his tone, as he made this interruptive remark.

"Well, I was going to say," the speaker resumed, "that as she was knitting last night, and getting on capitally, down dropped the needle, and she had all her stitches to pick up again; that's just what we all do; we knit and knit, and just when we want to get on a trifle faster, out drops the needle, and we have a world of picking up to do."

"Don't think me hard, friend," the former speaker interposed, "for stopping you just now; for the fact is, I cannot stand much about little children suffering; I know all about that; I have lost three little girls myself, so I can tell you there's a soft place in my heart;" and so saying, he turned away his head from the company.

I ventured to put in a word here.

"You seem, said I, "to take rather a gloomy view of life. Not long since I heard a young couple say that life is *a hope*, but you don't seem to think so."

An ironical but not disrespectful titter followed this remark.

"That's exactly what I used to think," said one of the men; "there was always something saying, 'Come on a few steps further,'—and the further you went the further it went; and so there was nothing but disappointment and vexation."

"It would be very different," another added, "if every man could live his own life, without having anything to do with anybody else's life; but things get so mixed up together, till they're just like a thousand pieces of string that have got all twisted and knotted, and you can't make anything of them."

"Worse than that," a severe critic replied—"it seems to me there are too many of us for this little bit of a world; so men are tumbling over one another, and it goes badly with the weak ones; and then," he continued, without showing the point of connection, "when things seem to be over, and done with, they come up again years and years after, and take hold of you like so many constables."

"That's a good 'un," said a rough-looking speaker, his eyes brightening as if he had suddenly met a friend; "ha! ha! you've hit it there. I go to seek a job, and just as things are putting themselves together comfortably, and I see my way clear to a pound a week, a man comes up, and says he to me, 'You used to work for So-and-so?' Says I, 'That's right;' says he, 'That's fifteen years since?' Says I, 'Right again;' and something comes into my throat. Says he, 'Yes, I know, my man; my uncle was foreman there, and he told my brother that you were

turned off, but not for being a teetotaller; is that right?' So I begin to cough, and to talk rather queer, and I am told that there's no opening at present for a new hand."

"That's just how things come round and round," said one of the company; "you think a thing is dead and buried, and so it is; but there is sure to be a ghost, or somebody's uncle told his nephew, who mentioned it to his half-cousin, and so the thing dogs a fellow's footsteps right away to the miserable end."

"Isn't that exactly what I said," a former speaker insisted; "things are all knotted together, and there's no getting them sorted; you see, if every man could keep his life quite alone, things would go a good deal straighter."

"But now," said I, "it is only fair to put the other side of the case: suppose our friend there, who was reminded of what he did fifteen years since, had at that time been a sober man—suppose he had pleased his employers, and made himself a good name—wouldn't he have found *that* a very good piece of string mixed up with the knot? You must not think that life is a one-sided affair."

"True," said one of the men; "fair's fair—if a man sows barley he cannot reap wheat, and if he makes a chimney-sweep of himself, he must not imagine that people will mistake him for a miller."

"Well," said I, "that's good common sense; now, if you will allow me, I will ask you a question: If you had to tell me in one word what life is, what word would you use? What is life?"

A man who had not spoken during the conversation, said, "I think that question has been pretty well answered by the talk we have just listened to, but if we have to put it into one word, I should say—life is a *maze*."

"So say we all," the men of middle age replied; "the answer is quite right—life is *a thicket*, A LABYRINTH, A MAZE."

III.

Has not *Evening* charms of its own, as well as hopeful Morning and fiery Noonday? Does it not, in tender eloquence, speak of work finished and rest well earned? It comes upon the day like a benediction upon the prayer of labour, and is a hint of the Sabbath, as the Sabbath is a hint of heaven. It is the serene old age of the exhausted Day. It wears the sunset as a crown, and passes away to the great Shadow through the glimmering portals of the early stars. It is true that there is a touch of melancholy upon the tranquil countenance of

evening, but its pensiveness is not sorrow. All endings have pathetic meanings: all victories have in them something of the sadness of battle. Tell me of a more beautiful picture than that of an old man, white with the snow of score upon score of years, quiet with the holy peace of a good conscience, seated under the yellowing foliage of an aged tree, on an evening in advanced autumn? The picture is complete in pathetic consistency: descending life, retiring sun, decaying foliage, vanishing year—many evenings gathered into one! I remember such a scene; I remember, too, my brief interview with the venerable patriarch who was its central figure.

"I live in the past, sir, and not in the present," was his first sentence.

"Why not in the present?" I ventured to inquire.

"Ah, sir," said he, "the present is not to be compared with the past; life is hardly worth living now; things have changed, sir, and changed for the worse."

"Are you very old?" said I, in a respectful tone.

"So old, sir, as to be almost young again," he replied. "I shall soon have done with the journey now; I have passed the eighty-fifth milestone."

"And you don't care much for the things that are going on just now?"

"The fact is, sir," said he, looking steadily at me through his worn and feeble eyes—"the fact is, I *forget* them. Tell me of anything that happened in my life sixty—aye, and even seventy—years ago, and I shall remember everything about it; but do you know, sir, I cannot remember what happened yesterday."

"Now," said I, "there's one question I should like to ask you, if you will be good enough to allow me—How does life look now you see it from the far end?"

"Ah!" said he, "I can tell you how it looks to me. I often go back and see it all. I think of births, marriages, and deaths; I go over the histories of all the families I have known, and I say to myself—Where are the children and the children's children? I think of all the rich men that I have seen become poor, and of all the poor men that I have seen become rich; I walk over the churchyard and read the lettering on the tombstones; I go from street to street in the town where I lived, and count how often the signs have changed names; I talk to young men about their grandfathers; and when I get a good long talk with anybody who is about my own age, why, sir, it seems as if my old heart was becoming young again"—the old man paused here, and a strange light gave new meaning to his face.

"And what does it all look like?" said I, holding him to the subject.

"Look like?" he repeated; "why, sir, it looks just like A DREAM."

So Morning, Mid-day, and Evening had each its own answer to the question, What is life? Youth said, It is a *hope;* Manhood said, It is a *maze;* Old Age said, It is a *dream;*—and in these answers I found nothing but sadness. The beginning was beautiful, the progress was exciting, but the end was full of pain: a hope that is lost in a tangled thicket, a thicket that leaves upon the mind nothing but the haze and mystery of a dream, such cannot be a true interpretation of the tormenting problem of life. I met an Interpreter who set these answers in a right order. "The answers," said he, "are correct; life is indeed a hope, a maze, a dream; but whoso believeth in me shall find that this order shall be reversed: youth shall be a dream; manhood shall be a strife; old age shall be a hope! When the traveller passes the last milestone, there shall arise upon the vision of his soul a light in which he shall not so much as see the momentary shadow which men call death."

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not leave life a dream, it blesses it with a hope! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope," "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast:" "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed:" "now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." What is the effect of this hope on our life? Is it an occasion of indolence, of self-neglect, of presumption as to the future? The answer is clear and final—"Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure:" "having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The splendour of our hope is to be the measure of our discipline!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 12TH, 1870.

THE SIGNS OF A TRUE MINISTRY.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."—ISAIAH lxi. 1, 2, 3.

THIS word was, of course, fulfilled in all the beauty and grace of its meaning in the person and work of Jesus Christ; yet I propose to regard it as setting forth the signs of a true service for the kingdom of God, whether that service be rendered by an individual labourer or by the Church in its collective capacity. Looked at in this light, the text becomes solemn as a judgment seat, and terrible as the vision of God.

In going to the Old Testament for lessons about true service in the Christian kingdom, we are not taking a step backwards. On this subject Isaiah is as good a teacher as John. Every now and then we come upon sentences in the Old Testament which might have formed the very climax and peroration of the New—sentences that seem out of place, that occur in the record before their time, just as in early winter we have occasional days that in point of brightness might have been days in summer. Hence we say at such a time, "Why to-day is more like a June day than anything else; it is so bright and so genial." And so in the Old Testament we come upon days that are apparently out of season; we get glimpses of summer even in winter; and even in the chill of the morning we come now and again upon warmth that belongs properly to

the noon-day. There are in the Old Testament glimpses that are full of glory: voices that seem to tell the whole story of gospel love. We say of a child sometimes, "Really he talks beyond his years! How intelligent he is for one so young! Why he speaks as if he were ten years older than he really is." So, in the Old Testament, we come upon unexpected words, brilliant revelations, pathetic sentences, that, in our judgment, might have been reserved for a later period of the record. Prophets sometimes spake as if they saw clearly to the very end of time; and they come near to us and speak to us with a familiarity that is really startling. They were made free of limitations which crippled other men, and so they lived in what was to them a large and crowded world. The text, then, you see is ancient, yet modern; the root is old, yet the fruit is beautiful with new bloom, and rich with juices that are just ripe. It is ever so, for he who speaks truth, is everlasting. Let us dwell upon these words, then, not as the Old Testament words only, but as New Testament declarations, and as testimonies and teachings appropriate to our own day, and to our own sphere of Christian service, whatever that may be.

In speaking of the Christian service, whatever that may be—in speaking of the Christian ministry—I am not speaking of a professional class of persons who occupy a well-defined *status* in the Church; I enlarge the word "ministry" so as to include all individual effort, all social effort, and all private endeavour to reveal Christ more fully to the world, and all public attempts to lift up a testimony on behalf of Christ, and His truth, and His kingdom; and, looked at in this sense, the text supplies us with some two or three points of the utmost practical utility and instructiveness.

I. First of all the text declares, that *the true ministry is always inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost.* "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." The minister does not speak in his own name, or work in his own strength. The words that come from him, if he be a true servant of God, are not words of his own imagining and his own device. Even when he has laboured in the collection, and done his utmost to work them out to a softness of beauty and polish, they are not his words; and often when he is speaking most brokenly and stumblingly, without apparent coherence, and occasionally with intense dissatisfaction to himself, he is speaking words that God has put into him, and that God will use for purposes and ends which the minister can never fully understand. A ministry without the Holy Ghost is a cloud without water; a Church without the Holy Ghost is a tree twice dead, that cannot too soon be pulled up by the roots. The very first point, then, that is brought before us is a point that ought to force us in upon ourselves with reverent self-examination, with an intense desire to be faithful to ourselves and the truth in answering the question—Have we the Holy Ghost? We have a name to live; we have a public profession; we have a *status* that is clearly defined; we have a creed that we can repeat by rote; we have a framework; we have artificial appointments and arrangements, cumbrous and endless, but under all, and at the heart of all, and inspiring all, and covering all with an unwasting and all-attractive lustre, have we God the Holy Ghost? That our service may be animated by the Holy Spirit, and should express divine ideas and

purposes, is clear from the consideration that ours is not an earthly ministry contemplating earthly matters. We are not mere statesmen; we are not politicians; we are not conceiving and arranging anything that relates merely to the outer world, to society as a passing faction; we are addressing ourselves to the soul, the thought, the conscience, the innermost life of the world. If our ministry related only to the politics of the day, or to the philanthropic ameliorations of the passing day, then we might work according to our own genius, and our own fancy, and our own will; but when we are working not for this world only, but for worlds we have never seen, and which have been revealed to us by a Spirit which is not of this world, we have to be careful that we work not in our own strength or after our own imagination, but clearly, steadily, and constantly along the line of Divine inspiration. And herein is the wisdom of the Church often humbled; nay, more, herein the wisdom of the Church is often turned out of doors altogether, and banished as a folly and an intrusion. In working out religious ideas and Christian purposes, it is not the man who has the longest head that can always do the most good; it is not the craftiest legislator that can always do the most for the world's uplifting—it is the man who says—and says in reverence and humility—"I am but a vessel, an instrument, an agent; I am not the master, I am but the servant. Lord God, be thou my inspiration, my strength, and the completeness of my power." And thus oftentimes the youngest, the poorest, the unlikeliest, being enriched by those gifts of the Holy Ghost, come to the world with a plenitude of efficiency which is impossible to men who only speak according to their own imaginations, and have no deep, tender, close, long-continued communion with the Holy Ghost. The natural man cannot understand the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. The things of God are foolishness to the carnal mind. A man who is not under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost has not the faculty whereby spiritual things are perceived. He is as a blind man in the midst of a summer landscape; he is as one who is deaf in the midst of melodies and harmonies loud as thunder, orderly as the utterances of the sea. They are nothing to him. He has not the faculty, he has not the life that sees these things, and lays hold upon them, and appropriates them, and reproduces them in positive and beneficent life. And this is the explanation of much of the distaste which men have for religious services and religious engagements. And this distaste is not at all to be wondered at. Don't expect the dead man to enjoy your banquet, don't expect the blind man to admire your works of art, don't call upon the dumb for a psalm, or a hymn of adoration or praise. We are told now and again that if the sermon were carefully thought over and carefully written, according to the most approved literary models, and if our worship were artistic and scientific, and arranged in a very orderly and æsthetic manner, and that if we paid more attention to our ritual, to our methods of observances, we should gather around us the cultivated and the refined, and the sanctuary would be a place of attraction. Brethren, standing here with this book, which is God's, open before me, I give it as my opinion that such representation is a delusion and a lie. Men must have in them spiritual power before they can relish spiritual service. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in

truth. The eye will weary of the finest clothing in the sanctuary; the ear will become sated with the most artistic offerings of praise, and men who are hungering after life and after sustenance for the soul will cast away, as dry and useless husks, the grandest literary performances that unsanctified genius can produce. If, therefore, we would relish the services of the sanctuary, if we would have God's house a place near at hand, if we would receive benefit for the humblest ministrant of God that ever attempted to expound His Word, we must bring with us the right spirit, the keen appetite, the intense desire, the spiritual faculty; and then the poorest table that ever was spread shall yield viands nutritious, satisfying the soul's hunger, and appeasing it. Have we the Holy Ghost? Do not let us set up any arbitrary standard by which we give an answer to that inquiry. The Holy Spirit does not work according to our notions of uniformity. The man who has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him will not always be the same man in power, will not always be the same man in readiness to do work for Christ. The Holy Ghost is dwelling in us in our incomplete state. He has to counteract in us everything that is depraved, to make up deficiencies, to rectify things that are crooked and perverse, and therefore the same man will not always be the same worker, and yet he may be conscious of having dwelling in him the Spirit of the most high God, who is constantly engaged in endeavouring to bring him into obedience with the Divine will, and qualifying him for Christian service. The prophets had the Holy Ghost only occasionally; the Holy Ghost visited the prophets transiently. The prophets had a strange tumultuous experience; they were called up, borne away, strange sights were flashed upon their vision, strange voices sounded in their soul. They did not always understand that which they spoke. But with us the case is different; the Holy Spirit is given to us that He may abide with us for ever. It is not an occasional flash of light that we see; it is constant day with us. It is not an incomplete, abrupt, and startling articulation that breaks upon the ear of our soul; it is a testimony, steady, emphatic, complete. What manner of men, then, ought we to be! what manner of Church ought we to be, if we work up to the line of our spiritual vocation, and realize the fact that spiritual privilege is the measure of personal responsibility! I feel that our ministry—our service, at home, in the school, in the pulpit, in business, everywhere, ought to be more intensely spiritual. There may be little said, and yet there may be much felt. There may not be much outward demonstration, and yet there may be a keen and irresistible influence brought to bear upon all the relations by which we are surrounded. All that is outward, visible, tangible, must go down. We are not, therefore, to judge of progress by these things; but spiritual character, spiritual vitality, subtle influence will exercise, intensify, and extend until men who are wicked will feel themselves in our company in the presence of a consuming fire, and people that are good, in how little a degree soever, will feel in our presence as if the summer's sun had blessed them, and all the genial influences of heaven were pouring themselves upon them. Now, is it so with us? Do we get into men's consciences? Do we trouble evil-doers? Do we by our method of doing things, by our speech, and by our whole life get into men's interior existence, troubling them when they are doing that

which is wrong, and blessing them when they are making even the faintest attempts after that which is right? These are questions that divide, if we heed them aright, the very marrow and bones. They ought to be to us quick and powerful, searching our hearts, and compelling an answer which will either bring us to deeper humiliation or excite us to loftier joys. Let this be laid down as a rule. Let us never stray from this great vital central truth; that every man who is professedly in Christ, and professedly doing Christ's work, must prove the divinity of his vocation, and the reality of his character, not by oral profession and ritual observance, but by the inexpressible, subtle, ever-present, and all-convincing Influence which we describe in its completeness by the name of the Holy Ghost. Don't let any man imagine that hence the day of inspiration is gone. Allowing, which we are bound to do, (and which we do not by constraint, but with all thankfulness to God for the testimony), that the prophets and the apostles spake by inspiration that was peculiar to themselves and altogether incommunicable, still, so long as the Holy Ghost lives, the Church in which He dwells must be a Church inspired. We mistake inspiration, if we imagine that it is limited to the making of a new Bible, to the writing of new prophecies, and the delineation of a new Christ. We need to be inspired in all that we may interpret. The Bible is constantly a new Bible to the man who has the Holy Ghost in him, because to him it is given to see new profundities in the Divine Word, clearer lustre in the heavenly testimony; and to him, also, it is given to see by a finer, clearer, tenderer expression what was meant by the wondrous, mysterious words which to the carnal mind are darkness and folly. Let us pray for inspiration. We are not doing what is required of us, if we are taking step by step with the common men of the world, its common scholars, and its common thinkers, and its common writers. There is power in us, as Christians, whether private or public—a specialty of talent, an intensity and clearness of perception into spiritual things which is altogether unattainable by men who only read common books with common eyes. I am calling myself, therefore, and the Church, to something that is very lofty, and altogether unique and special. In doing so I feel that I am speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We are not engaged in a contest that can be conducted on equal terms. We have not to appeal to the understanding of the world alone. We cannot put down in black and white, and in so many sentences and paragraphs, the whole meaning that is in our soul, as the very life of its comfort, its rest, its anticipations. Arithmeticians can tell all they know; poets can invite those who love them to accompany them in their aërial flights; men of science can take their scholars with them step by step down to the very end of the brilliant journey; but the Christian teacher often can only hint and brokenly articulate the things that are in him. When he has done his very utmost he has to lift his finger, and point to lengths that have not been traversed—worlds that have not been opened. He addresses the finest powers, the finest sensibilities, the deepest chords, and the most urgent necessities of human nature. He needs inspiration for this. His inspiration will not always be understood. To the worldly, the carnal, the vulgar, and those who are under the dominion of the devil, his inspiration will often be as an idiot's tale, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

II. The text shows us, in the second place, that *the true ministry is animated by the sublimest benevolence.* If you will read the statement given by the prophet, you will find throughout the statement a tone of kindliness, benevolence, sympathy, gentleness, pity for all human sorrow. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the weak. He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Therein may be known the true ministry of the Gospel. Suspect every ministry that is gloomy. If you come into contact with a preacher of Christ, or with a private expositor of Christian truth, who is constantly enveloped in gloom and melancholy, whose soul is in sorrow, and from whose lips there never come the sounds of music and joy, set it down as a fact that that teacher knows nothing about the spirit of the Gospel. The key-note of the Gospel is joy; the watchword of the Gospel is liberty. The Gospel does not come to us to make us sadder, to bring us down in the dust and keep us there, as if we had no right to be up in the sunshine; and therefore any ministry, public or private, that increases our gloom, is a ministry that never came out of yonder great central Light that is the Light of the universe. A ministry that interprets human sorrow downward, and makes something of it that should depress to still deeper depths human hearts, human minds, is a gospel that is not of God. If any sermon, any private advice we ever hear, tends to narrow and cramp human life, to break our wings, and to shut us up in prison, that sermon—that advice—comes not of Divine but of diabolic suggestion. And therefore I claim that any man coming with such a gladdening testimony as this ought to be, in the first instance at all events, heartily welcomed by the world. A man that says, "I come with good tidings, to bind up the broken-hearted, with a charter of liberty to them that are bound, to comfort all that mourn," ought not to have ungracious welcome; he ought to bespeak the most affectionate, cordial attention of the word.

Now this is what is claimed on behalf of Christianity. The great appeal which Christianity makes to the world is this: "I come to make human life freer, grander, purer; I come to open worlds in which human life can be more perfectly developed; I come to set man towards man in the relation of brother towards brother; to dry the fountain of human sorrow; to break the chains of human captivity; to dispel intellectual and moral darkness, and to bring in an unending summer day:" and any religion that comes with a profession of that kind, even were it nothing more, will, *primâ facie*, demand to be heard as possibly for God. Brethren, especially those of you who are young and are under misconceptions as to the nature, the genius, and the purpose of Christianity, let me call your attention to this fact, that wherever it comes it never comes to men to make them less, to put their eyes out, to take them away from light, to deprive them of music, and to shut them up in some cramped position; it always comes with hope, promise, inspiration, music; and that I hold to be one of its first and most impressive proofs, that it is not of human device, but of Divine inspiration.

III. The text shows, in the third and last place, that *the true ministry, whether public or private, never shrinks from its more awful functions.* Observe this sentence in the midst of the declarations of the text: "To proclaim the day of vengeance of our God." There must yet be a day of vengeance in human history. Without a day of vengeance human history would not be merely poetically incomplete, but morally imperfect. We must yet have the thunder and lightning; there must be a dragging forth of men to the judgment-seat. All trampled rights demand a day of vengeance; outraged honour, insulted virtue, oppressed weakness, call for a day of vengeance. The universe can never enter into its possession of a complete and abiding heaven until every son of perdition has been dashed into the unbottomed abyss of hell. Heaven is no mixture—heaven is no heterogeneous association of all kinds of character. Peace is impossible so long as impurity is in existence. Heaven will for ever remain unattainable, or at least incomplete, until every enemy of Christ has been crushed under his feet—made a footstool of.

The day of vengeance will be spiritual. We may figure the day of vengeance by outward signs. We point to the fire, and we say, "There, that is a symbol of the day of vengeance." We follow the course of the lightning, and we say, "There, that is an emblem of vengeance." But these things are but outward symbols: the true and terrible vengeance is spiritual. When a man's heart gets up within him and says, "Yes, there is liar written on your forehead; there is villain written on the inmost folds of your life," that is vengeance. When evil memories are awakened, and get round a man like so many grim, grisly spectres, and affright him out of his self-contentment, that is vengeance. You cannot beat a man with rods, and cause him to suffer to the utmost extremity of his capability; you cannot whip a man with cords till you have whipped him enough: every man must whip himself. The Spirit of God must be so revealed in a man that he will see himself as he really is, and pronounce his own sentence upon himself, so that he shall turn himself away from heaven, and from life, and from God, and from saints, and say, "Yes, it is right; I ought not to be there. If there is a devil in the universe, he only can be my fit companion." When a man gives way in that manner, when his heart collapses, when he gets up and says to God, "Yes, I am visited with thy judgments: they are right and true altogether," that is the day of vengeance. If we talk about the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, it is only because we seek to typify by outward circumstances and figures that which never can be explained by human language or human emblems. Vengeance is spiritual. It is the self-tormenting conscience, the collapsing, self-accusing, dying heart.

Then let us often stand before this text as before a judgment-seat. Have we the Holy Ghost, or is ours but a feeble testimony we have learnt from teachers that have no claim to Divine inspiration? Are we a joy to all that mourn? Are we eyes to the blind and feet to the lame? The cause we know not, do we search out? And does the neighbourhood in which we live, the family in which we dwell, the business which we work, feel that if we were withdrawn, our withdrawal would be as the eclipse of a great light? Are we a terror to evil-doers? Do villains

turn aside when they see us and say, "Oh, they are come again?" Do they hasten away with their evil looks and their vile machinations and great and little knaveries, when they see us coming, as men would flee from a fire and avoid a storm; or do they welcome us—do they say, "Well met, come in. We are doing this; you will join us?" Is that our Christianity; something that will easily amalgamate with anything that is going on, that can sit down anywhere and be quite at home, that can fall into any habits and repronounce any language, without giving people to feel that there is anything in us? Is that our Holy Ghost? The Christian ought to clear a space for himself wherever he goes. Little children, humble hearts, mourning souls, reverent, noble, heavenly minded persons ought to come round him and say, "Welcome in God's name. Don't leave us: abide with us a long while;" but knaves and cowards and hypocrites, people who are rolling iniquity under their tongue as a sweet morsel—masked people—ought to feel terribly uncomfortable when a Christian man comes among them. They ought to know him from afar. There should be surrounding him a kind of atmosphere in which men that are evil cannot breathe and live—the knave should shrink away from his sight, the coward should hide himself in the lowest and vilest dust—and the man who was contemplating some keen, clever stroke, in which there should be dishonour and injustice, should feel himself paralyzed, disabled, half-damned, in the presence of a man whose soul is a-fire with Divine truth.

The City Temple.

A SERMON

PREACHED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, June 19th, 1870.

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow labourer."—Philemon, ver. 1.

It would appear that a man named Onesimus had run away from his master, Philemon, and that during the period of his absence—an unlawful absence under the circumstances—he had received Christian benefit from the instruction of the Apostle Paul. He had, indeed, become converted to Jesus Christ. He who was formerly a worldly, selfish man, had become a Christian indeed, and under these new and better circumstances a difficult question arose as to his future. As a matter of fact, without going into the question of slavery at all, Onesimus did, in some sense or other, belong to Philemon. There were certain civil relations between the two, and those civil relations must be recognised and honoured. The Apostle Paul having been the means of converting Onesimus, did not say to him, "Now you must make the best of your case; I have nothing to do with your civil position; you must go back to Philemon and make as good a case out for yourself as you can; I have got nothing at all to do with that." Had Paul spoken so, he might have escaped a very delicate and difficult business. But the Apostle Paul was not the man to run away from difficult questions, and to make himself as easy as possible Having been the means of giving this man the

liberty of Divine grace, he boldly, with all the force of his character and all the sagacity of his intellect, confronted this very difficult question of the return of Onesimus. How did he act? He wrote a private personal note to Philemon. He does not write in his strictly apostolic capacity; not in an imperative and commanding tone. He writes a note of courtesy; and before going into the great principles which underlie this beautiful little story, I want us to look at the clever, ingenious, effectual manner in which the Apostle approaches, discusses, and settles the question. He makes a good deal of himself, does Paul, in this letter; and it is possible for a man to make a good deal of himself with the one view of making a good deal of somebody else. "A very subtle inflexion of selfishness," one would say, from many of the little sentences in this letter. "Why, Paul is elevating himself; he is making a good deal of his own history; he is putting his own claims pretty fully forward in this note, after all, and therefore he must be a very vainglorious man." That criticism would be entirely beside the mark; it would be flippant, foolish, false. It is true the Apostle does make a good deal of himself; but oh, with what gracefulness does he turn and put the whole of his personal claims as so much weight to be given to the case of Onesimus! He says, "I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ—a man whose one hand is bound to a soldier by a chain. I am in bondage, and I am using the hand that is not chained to write this private urgent note to thee, beloved Philemon." There is a touch of pathos. Then he proceeds to recognise, in ample and graceful terms, the Christian standing and service of Philemon. "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints, for we have great joy and consolation in thy love." There is a great art in saying true things right up to—yet just under—the point of what men call flattery. There is a skill in naming one by one, in cumulative order, the services which any man has rendered, and yet to save that nomination of services from the charge of fawning and adulation. Paul boldly recognises what Philemon had done, blesses him in the name of the Lord, and shows how clear, how vivid and faithful, was his own memory of all that Philemon had done for the Christian cause, and then he has to turn and come to the business. There is a great art in getting round a corner. Some are always getting wrong just there. They go round so sharply, so incautiously, that if there is anybody in the way, even if there is any post in the way, up they go against him or it, as the case may be, and they suffer accordingly. Yes, some of your young men might learn a good deal about these little common things in the New Testament. Paul has to get round a corner. Up to this point he has

managed well, but now he has to bring the argument and the persuasion to bear. How does he do it? He says, in the eighth verse, "Though I might be bold in Christ to enjoin thee—though I might use the imperative mood and say, 'Do this,' yet I won't." There is something better than the imperative mood. Things are not always best done when you say roughly and bluntly, "Do that." There is a more excellent way. "For love's sake, I rather beseech thee." Now you throw the responsibility upon the man. If it had been a question of direct and distinct order, "Do it," then the responsibility would have rested upon the sagacity of the commander; he would have the responsibility of saying, "This is right: do it." But, with the wondrous gracefulness of a courtesy which cannot be taught in the schools for so many coppers a week, he says, "For love's sake, I beseech thee;" and then he adds a stroke full of pathos, "being such an one as Paul the aged;" and he adds another stroke to that pathos which is more pathetic still, "and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Now, he makes all this out in his own case; he collates his own experience, and virtues, and excellences in this way, that he may use them in the interests of a runaway slave. This is the true use of life, to gather up all one's education, advantages, services public and private, to combine them into one grand testimony, and to urge that testimony, not on our own behalf, but on behalf of some poor weak castaway creature. We use our greatness well, when we use it to make other people free, and happy, and safe. The grace of God is in a man in this—that all he is, and has been able to do, is given in the interests of humanity. And how clearly and beautifully is that grace seen, when it is all used for the restoration of a runaway slave, whom many persons might have thought might have been blotted out of existence, and the world would be none the poorer. But this is Christian teaching, that no man is to be despised. No man can be done without. The coarsest pebble on the road, as well as the most polished and elaborately carved column, or cornice, or ornament in the cathedral or the palace, must be used and held in proportionate honour. This, then, entirely destroys any force there might be in the insinuation that Paul has made a good deal of himself in this private note to Philemon.

And this brings us up to this point. We have done something, we are something, we have had advantages of birth, of education, of social position. Are we prepared to turn all these advantages to the account of a poor down-trodden hopeless creature; and are we prepared that our life should become the life of other people, so that the poorest may say and the vilest, "as long as that Christian man has life I have hope: he will work for me; he will put down all his advantages, and he will

make all these advantages so many stepping-stones by which I may cross over my difficulty, and find my way to restored position, to recovered happiness." He who lives so lives twice. He who lives in this way never dies.

So much then for the personal matter, so far as the case of Paul is concerned. Now, what is the great principle of the gravest import and of the widest application which we find in this story? It is the great principle of mediation. Christianity is a system of mediation. There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. We may see this principle or doctrine of mediation more clearly and simply here than we can see it as a Christian mystery. Yet, looking at it under these circumstances, it may help us to bear the blaze of its glory as the grand fact in our present disciplinary condition. Is there a young hearer in this chapel who does not understand the meaning of the word mediation, or mediate, or mediator? I saw some sturdy little ones coming into the chapel this morning, and I was quite delighted to see the little toddling creatures coming into this place of worship, for I had been given to understand that certainly there were no children in the City on a Sunday; and I wondered whether I could ever do this—make clear what is meant by "mediation," but I gave it up. I said "No, it cannot be broken small enough for those little creatures." But perhaps it may be explained to those who are two or three years older.

Now, what is the meaning of this word mediate, mediation, mediator? You find it in the New Testament; what is the explanation of it? Suppose that your father has been very angry, by something that you have done; and suppose you are so ashamed of having done it that you dare not look your father in the face; you would rather go ten miles than look at him. You know you have done wrong, and that he has a right to be very angry with you indeed, and so you say, "I dare not look at him; I cannot go to him." And suppose your sister should come to you, and say, "Now you have done wrong, and your father is very much grieved indeed; he is full of just anger; and yet I do not like to see you and him separated in this way—don't like to see you in this condition of dishonour, and fear, and trembling, being afraid of your own father's face. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll go and speak to your father for you, and I'll tell him you are very sorry, and that if he will forgive you you will be very glad, and you will come and throw yourself at his feet, and ask his pardon. Now, I'll do that;" and your sister goes away to your father, and explains the case, and asks his pardon, and tells how sorry you are, and asks him to see you, and talk the thing over with you from beginning to end, and see if you cannot both get together again. What is your sister? She is a mediator; one who stands in

the middle, who goes first to one, and then to the other. She is a mediator. Now, I say that in this little letter we have the principle of mediation acted upon, shown in one of its tenderest and most impressive aspects. What is Paul here? Paul is the mediator. He does not say to Onesimus, "You must go and face your master yourself, and make the best of the case you can." He says, "I will go between you. I will write a letter. I will tell Philemon just how the case stands, and I will plead for you." Paul was the mediator, therefore, in that case.

Here you have one man doing something for the sake of another. That is one of the advantages of mediation, and the highest advantage of the mediation of Jesus Christ. Philemon is to do something, for Paul's sake. He is in the meantime to overlook the case of Onesimus altogether, and to do something in the case; because Paul asked him to do it. Now, we are in the habit of saying in our prayers and in our pleading with God, and before him, "Do this, for Christ's sake." Philemon was to do it for Paul's sake; and we are taught thereby somewhat of the mystery by which God moves towards men, for Christ's sake. "Granted that Onesimus deserves to be scourged, to be afflicted," Paul says, "for my sake don't do it." Suppose (which indeed is no supposition, but a reality of the gravest kind) that the sinner deserves to be driven from the presence of God, and to be banished into outer darkness for ever. Christ says, "Don't do it. Look at the cross, at these wounded hands, and wounded feet, and by the blood which was shed in sacrifice—according to thine own infinite love was that blood shed—pardon the sinner, recall him to hope; don't cut him down, but give him opportunity of repentance and restoration." We cannot feel these Christian mysteries, you observe, quite as closely and sharply as a case of mediation between man and man; but, so far as we can hint at the meaning, that is the explanation which I have now endeavoured to make. As Philemon was asked to do something for Paul's sake, to a man who had dishonoured him, so Almighty God is implored, for Christ's sake, to hear our prayers, and to give us extended opportunity of obtaining restoration to His favour, and to the peace which we lost when we committed sin. Here is one man making himself responsible for another. Paul made himself responsible for Onesimus. He said, "If he hath wronged thee or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it." Now, here is a principle of mediation that is intensely practical. There is a mediation which begins and ends with mere argument and expostulation, that consists in a skilful putting to the party who is in anger of the case of the party who has disgraced himself; but you do not advance to the further point, and become responsible for him in any degree. You shrink at

that point. You say "No, I simply state the case, and advise such and such a course; but I do not enter into any obligations or responsibilities about it." But here is Paul, who carries out the principle of mediation further than mere argument. He says, "If this runaway slave of thine owes thee anything, or has wronged thee, make a bill out for me. Put it down to my account; I will repay thee." And is there not a sense, never to be explained, because never to be comprehended, in which Christ is making up to justice, and truth, and honour, and divinity, all that we have done that has been wrong, untrue, impure, false, mischievous? Jesus Christ stood in the sinner's stead. Jesus Christ received the blow which would have destroyed the world. Argue about it as you please, refine and contend with much skill of language and persistence of tenacity, but you come round again to some principle of substitution in the case of the work of Jesus Christ. "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. He was delivered for our offences." He was the Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world. Granted that there may be many little refinements upon these words, and many different ways of explaining them, yet, under all the explanation, you must get at some principle of substitution—Christ standing in man's stead—or, where you explain one difficulty, you invite a thousand.

Here is one man having joy in the restoration of another. "Yea, brother," says Paul, "let me have joy of thee in the Lord." Paul will be the happier for the restoration of Onesimus. True, Onesimus is only a servant; yet if he be restored Paul will be made glad. "Let me have joy in thee, brother, in the restoration of this poor runaway servant of thine." And is not this a feature of the highest life? Having joy in seeing the prodigal home again; being glad when people that were on the outside are brought in, and are entertained with the hospitality of reanimated friendship—this is true life. Alas! there are some of us that do not care much what becomes of anybody that is a few yards from us. If we are told that they have been recovered and saved, we may tamely, and with an insipidity that is sickening, say we are glad to hear it; but that is not life—that is a satire upon life, a wretched travesty on all that is divine in our nature. He lives who lives in others, and whose soul expands, and glows when it hears that some poor wretched creature has been taken up out of the dust, has been recovered to confidence, and has been set up in some high place of honour and esteem. Just as we reach that feeling, just as we understand that principle, do we come into the mystery of that love which fills the heart of the Saviour, and gives him satisfaction for the travail of his soul.

Now, friends, we cannot do without mediation; we cannot open the door of God's temple, and go right into Him and face it out. Just in proportion as we think we can do it, do we put ourselves away from all the meaning and the comfort of the cross of Christ. One of two things is true. If the sinner can go to God and argue God down, and by the sheer force of logic and self-vindication claim a place in heaven, then the cross of Christ is the infinite blunder of Infinite Wisdom. If a man can go back to God, and put his case before Him so clearly and justly as to demand an acquittal, then all this system of mediation founded in Christ, expressed by His agony, confirmed by His blood, is the most criminal blunder of which any intelligent being could be capable. Let us be clear upon this point, or we shall never be Christians. A man must get down to that point of self-accusation which compels him to say, "I dare not look at God; I dare not ask an interview; I should be consumed by the blaze of God's dishonoured justice and holiness; I dare not see Him." When he gets down there he will be prepared for a Gospel; and then, when some minister of Christ or friendly monitor comes to him and says, "There is a Mediator between God and men; He will see God for you; He will make your case His own; He will put it before God in connection with His own name," then the man, if he be really tormented by this self-accusation, will leap at the tidings; he will be glad at the announcement; he will say, "Abide with me! Tell me more about this. Explain it more fully." And he will say to this Mediator, "Blessed Saviour, take my case for me; in Thy hands it is safe. Intercede for me. Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief;" and out of that there shall come all that is known of the mystery of spiritual freedom and the restoration of the soul.

Think of Onesimus without the letter. He is going back to Philemon, and has no letter! He is puzzling his brain as he goes along to know how to begin when he sees Philemon—what to say—how to make a beginning, to put the case into anything like shape; and he does not know. He says, "I think I shall run away again. I really can't tell how to put this case. What can I say but that I am ashamed of myself, and that I am sorry for myself, and that I beg his pardon? He won't believe me. He'll say, 'Yes, you beg my pardon now! When you find you can't do better elsewhere, you come back here, do you, with your fine apologies and long explanations, and your hypocritical tears and canting sobs! That's the way you do it, is it?'" He says, "I think I shan't go! I can't go!" That is Onesimus without the letter. But Onesimus with the letter! He says, "This is the letter; I shall say nothing to him; I shall just put this into his hand; he'll know Paul's

writing; he'll wonder how ever I got hold of this letter, and he'll read the letter before he says anything to me." He says, "Oh, I mustn't lose the letter—I mustn't lose the letter! This letter is my life; it is pleading for me. All Paul's great heart is in here. I mustn't lose the letter!" The letter saves him. Think of a sinner without Christ! How he is reasoning; how he is beating his brains; how he is goading his mind to suggest plans, and shapes, and arguments, and defences! And it all comes to nothing. Then think of the sinner with Christ! He says, "Oh, it is this Cross that I am going with; I shall hide myself behind the Cross! I shall not open my lips at all till I have been found behind the Cross; and then, when I do open them, I shall only say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" No man ever went to God in that way that was not instantly called in and set down to the hospitality of infinite love. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, ON THURSDAY MORNING, JUNE 23RD, 1870.

RAILWAY CRIES.

IT was announced in this chapel on Sunday morning last, that attention would be called to-day to a subject which could not more clearly be described, though disliking the novelty of the name, than by "Railway Cries." As the announcement was made on Sunday morning, of course no reference could possibly have been made to the appalling and heart-rending railway accident which has stricken all England with horror within the last few hours. Indeed, I have no intention whatever of referring to railway accidents—cries of anguish, moans of distress and helplessness—my subject lies in an entirely different direction. Still I am sure I speak the sentiment of every heart in this assembly when I say we do most fully and tenderly sympathize with all who to-day are mourning one of the most afflicting accidents of modern times. We commend them and the mystery of their affliction to Him who knows nothing of accidents, and who, by His wonderful method of government, turns even accidents into blessing, and causes hearts to bless Him where they expect to faint or despair.

It has occurred to me that a few words, based upon the cries which are heard at all principal railway stations, of instruction and stimulus, might be addressed to the young. I have young men, therefore, and young women, principally in view, in calling attention to some three or four of these well-known, and to me, when morally interpreted, impressive and instructive cries.

You have been in a railway station when trains have been preparing to go East, West, North, and South, and whens uddenly and startlingly, in a clear and commanding tone, half a dozen men have shouted at once, "Where are you for?"—a very important question in a railway station, and everywhere else. Here are trains starting in all directions, and you are standing upon the platform, and it is demanded of you, "Where are you for?" Suppose a man should say in reply to that question, "I do not know where I am for," it would not require very long time to sit in

inquest upon that case, and there would be perfect unanimity in the verdict that the man was a fool. It is amazing, however, how these verdicts and opinions upon people are turned back upon ourselves, oftentimes with tremendous accumulation of force and poignancy of application. There are men to-day in this great city, and in all cities, who, if you put the question to them, "Where are you for?" will not be able to return a sensible reply to the inquiry. They may tell you the direction of their immediate errand, they may point out this street or that as their destination; but looking at the question as involving the future, as touching upon affairs of destiny, they absolutely know nothing. They are groping round an endless lane; they hope to arrive somewhere, and they have a dull impression that probably it will be somewhere that may after all be for the best. But is this a right way of going on in life? Ought not a man to have something definite before his own mind? I know that all our plans and purposes are subject to modifications, arising from influences about which no just calculation can be made, but looking at life broadly and sensibly, ought not every *young* man in particular to have some definite object before him, and to be able to say, "I am moving in this direction; I intend to go forward in this pursuit; I have examined it; I have calculated possibilities and consequences, and, God helping me, I am for this object, or for that?" What is your plan of life? Where are you for? After all, you have blamed the man at the railway station, who did not know where he was for; how might he turn round upon you with blasting chastisement, and say, "If I do not know where I am going to enjoy a few hours of the day, who are you that you should reprove me and sneer at me, when you know nothing about your own destiny, or where eternity may find you?" "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If you can, and can justly, sneer at a man who having gone to the station does not know where he is for—if you have intelligence enough to do that, then by that little speck of intelligence I blind thee, I confound thee, if thou dost not know where thou art for in the great outgoing towards destiny.

Well, people having told where they are for, so much progress having been made, probably you remember how the same voices call out to you in an equally commanding tone, "Take your seats." And that remark is not original in railway stations; it does not belong to railway stations altogether. They have no exclusive right and property in the commandment. Now, every man in life ought to have a seat, a position, a distinct place that belongs to him, and that he ought to be found in. Almighty God has not turned us out upon the earth in order that we might live a life of scrambling and contention; He has a purpose in our being here, and we are to ascertain that purpose as closely as we can, and to follow it out. Every man, therefore, ought to look about for his position, and he ought not to be content so long as he has in his heart a haunting

feeling that he is in somebody else's position. I can never forget standing in a great railway station, and being convulsed with laughter by a scene that occurred there. A man came into the station with a hat on which surely nobody ever did make, and with clothes on that I am sure ninety-nine out of a hundred would hardly touch, except with an instrument half a mile long, lest there might be something more than clothes; and this poor man, with his long stick and a bag in his hand, went straight into one of the finest first-class saloon carriages, lighted with gas, that was standing at the station. Unquestionably, you felt, "That man has no right there;" but then it was one of those misplacements of one's self that did not amount to giving anger or offence to anybody, but simply to the provocation of laughter; and a porter, who seemed to be a common-sense and straightforward man, went to him at once, and without any question being put he says, "Come out here!" There is a spirit in a man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. There is a fitness of things; there is a law of proportion in society. Every man has a seat, but there is a possibility of men getting into chief seats that ought to be sitting upon stools, and though there are many first-class passengers in third-class carriages, there are, alas! many third-class passengers in first-class saloons. Still, every man ought to feel that Divine Providence has a position—a place—for him, and he ought to find that place out, or do his diligence to find it out, and to be content with it, improving it as far as he can; but having ascertained that God has called him to that position, his first feeling ought to be one of contentment and thankfulness.

And do we commence the journey immediately after we have told where we are for and have taken our seats? No. The same people who have addressed us up to this point seem never to have done with us; not only with bell-ringing, and door-slamming, and strap-fastening, and wheel-banging and trying, but questions of a more personal nature. Hence the same men will call out to you after you have taken your seats, "Show your tickets!" A most impertinent demand indeed, one would think. And yet after all there must be a good deal of ticket-showing in life, if things are to be upon an orderly basis, and we are to get on comfortably and straightforwardly in the world. Every man must have some kind of credential or other, to explain and justify the position he holds. Every man must sooner or later show his ticket. Suppose a man had shown a third-class ticket in a first-class carriage, I apprehend the porter would not have said, "You've made a little mistake, but it's no matter." I rather think he would show him down the train somewhere. But if a first-class ticket were shown in a third-class compartment, probably the porter might not be so very rigorous in his morality. Still, justify your position: show your tickets; have some certificate, or proof, or warrant, or authority, for being where you are. It is needless

to point out that I am not referring, in giving these directions, to mere pieces of paper, to parchment certificates, or to sealed tickets, but a man must have some mark for being where he is. Be he statesman, or philosopher, or banker, or tradesman, he must at one period of his life or other justify by a sufficient warrant the occupation of his position. Suppose a man had taken out, in reply to the words "Show your tickets," a beautifully engraved address card, that would not have done. There is not a porter on the line that would not have sneered at that—a very nice thing for making a morning call about six o'clock in the evening with, but not for travelling. Suppose a man in reply to the question, on the demand "Show your tickets," had taken out a wedding card—that would not have done. "Why," you say, "does life turn upon as little things as these?" Yes, it does. Little things represent life. Little things turn the world. Little things represent great equivalents. It is not the piece of card the porter is satisfied with. It is because behind that there is an equivalent that represents a transaction completed, and therefore it is enough. What right have we to be where we are? Every man must prove his own right. We may say, "This man has no claim to be here, and that man has no right to be there," but every man has to prove his own standing-ground. You may give a man all the tickets and certificates and testimonials that wealth can possibly furnish, and yet you cannot make a man of him. No man can be made altogether of buttons; no man can justify his right to an influential position in society by pointing to a handful of papers. These papers must represent something more than themselves. Under that, before that, explanatory of them, there must have been great deeds, noble sufferings, heroic services, or beneficent energies. Yes, and men have sometimes to show their tickets. Sometimes I have been with men who, in reply to the question or demand "Show your tickets," have grumbled out in a kind of half sleepy way, "Season," and the porter, somehow, has not quite believed them, and he has said, "I must look at it, sir, if you please." Yes, a man cannot take a ticket at the beginning, and call out "Season," to everybody that asks him what right he has to be there. He must renew his position—he must renew his claim—he must again and again do certain things that will give him a further hold and lease upon public confidence and social honour. It cannot be done once for all. My dear young friends, you cannot in your teens do something that will save all your after life from any further service. You may take a good long spell at once; you may do some noble thing that will go on sounding and reduplicating for a few years; but you must again and again renew yourselves, and prove that your manhood is not stagnant, but a continuous and mighty development.

Well, do we go now? No, no, not yet. We have told where we are for; we have taken our seats, we have shown our tickets, and now the porters and officials begin to talk between themselves; they let us alone

now; and you will hear up and down the train the cry, "All right?" Whistle! Go! I must not let that lesson remain in the railway station; I must bring that out with me. It is a lesson for life. We have examination, careful processes of scrutiny, and then the word is passed one to another, "All right in front!" "All right behind!" "All right here!" and then "Go!" That is your programme in life, young man, if you are wise. Know where you are for, take your seat, show your ticket, ascertain you are all right, and then GO ON! Many people can tell where they are for, where they want to go; and they can take a seat, and they can show a ticket, but there is no "go" in them. Few people have courage to go. Don't go before you are all right; but, being all right, go! Have you a new thought, have you examined it, weighed it, tried it by the standards of the sanctuary? Yes. Then go and tell it. Have you a high and noble sentiment?—are you sure about it? Yes. Then go! Have you a deep, earnest conviction that you ought to speak upon this subject or upon that? Then go! The train would stand still there for ever but for the command to go. It is not enough to be right as to your destination, right as to your position, right as to your certificate, there must be that moving power in you that goes with perseverance, and that attains its end. I have known people, intelligent, quiet, respectable, honourable people, who never yet did go. Well, there are some very nice walking sticks indeed that never did take themselves out of the umbrella stand, and you could infallibly predict that they would be there just so at any given hour in the year. We must be something better than very nice, straight, strong polished walking sticks; we must GO! But you say "It is pleasanter to stand still." I do not think it is—not in the long run. A man gets tired of standing still as much as of going. God meets men by extremes; He makes indolence a weariness as well as industry; makes covetousness a loss, as well as prodigality. Oh! if every man in this large assembly would only "GO," the world would be the better for it. But so many of us have clear conceptions, just ideas, high sentiments, right principles, but we want that peculiar something which I cannot better describe than by the expression "decision to go." We are not to ask if anybody else is going; we are to go ourselves. You are not to say "I am waiting till my companion is ready to move, and then I shall be forthcoming;" every man must go on his own account, his own errand, and according to his own conviction.

Well, they have gone then—gone! We have seen the train move away, the station is cleared, the passengers have departed. Is that all? No. In five or six hours there is another cry. Men look into every carriage window, and say, "All change here!" Yes, "All change here!" That is a cry—a pathetic and saddening cry, that comes over our life sometime or other. We are boys at school—all so glad and happy; we make work day into holiday; we pledge eternal friendship to one another; we shall

never cease to think about each other's welfare, and to care for each other's prosperity! And, having made a vow of this high kind, a voice comes to us, and says, "All change here!" and our school is broken up. We part, with the best intentions to see one another again, and help one another, but there is no renewal of the friendship of happy school-days; we "change;" we see one another no more. And then there is a time when families get together in the sick chamber, and the physician comes to look at his sick patient, and by the shadow on his face, by the shaking of his head he says—says mutely, but not less pointedly, "All change here!" Yes; the father dies, the property is sold, the survivors take their way in life; widowhood and orphanage are now new names and new phases. "All change here!" I dare say there may be people in the world who can change fifty times a day, and care nothing about it; but any man who has a solemn view of life, and a tender heart, cannot look at these changes without putting to himself the question, "Is there not some high moral monition in these alterations and re-arrangements of society? If so, what is it? Let me take heed to it." To think of passengers in a railway train parting in anger, having had a long contention on the road—parting from one another with threatening and malediction—why that is not pleasant; it throws a shadow over one's journey, and haunts one after getting home with a feeling of unpleasantness. And yet there are some of us, I am afraid, that will part so in the great journey. Families that will be called upon to change here, and they won't have any opportunity of saying how sorry they were for that harsh expression, how their hearts fail them when they think of having given pain; and they would give a world if they could only have one clear hour with somebody they have injured. Let us move in the spirit that testifies that these associations will be broken up; and let us hold one another in tender regard, and high estimation—cease from uttering any words that would give needless pain to any human heart.

I have noticed about railway stations that there are many people there who are very busy in starting others, but never go themselves. Am I wrong in bringing that down into this sanctuary in severe application to myself, and in tender remonstrance with my brethren in the ministry, with Sunday school teachers, with all heads of houses? Is there not a possibility for us to be very anxious and careful about starting other people on the journey, but never going ourselves? I may have explained to my congregation how men may get to heaven. I may have been favoured with clearness of expression and emphasis of utterance, so as to have made some good impression upon those who have heard me, and yet it is possible that I may be standing here without taking one step on the shining road myself. Need I say—need I afflict you with commonplace, in saying how possible it is to know when to start, and how to start, and what course to take, and yet always to be only giving the

information, without acting upon that informat ion ourselves? What a judgment day will be ours; what an all inclusive and all-determining reply may be made to us, if such be our unhappy lot. You parents are anxious that your children should go in the right way. Even parents who are consciously wrong themselves are often careful about their children's moralities, their children's discipline, and virtue. It is not enough that you be careful about your family. What if they turn round upon you, and say, "Why don't you go first? Why don't you show us the way?" Brethren, I put these questions earnestly, but Oh! with such trembling of heart as amounts to self-accusation, lest in saying this I be but aggravating my own condemnation.

I have seen people come to railway stations, and have heard official persons say "Too late." The train has moved on, and they have been left behind. How humiliating! How the men who are left behind begin to explain to themselves how it was. If they had not remained to do so and so they would have been in ample time; if they had been content to have done just a little less they would have been perfectly punctual; and they begin to accuse themselves, and to increase their mortification, by the reflection that they could have helped this if they had only taken care to do so. Brethren, it is possible, in another sense, to be too late. The day of mercy is not endless. The sun of grace, once set, will rise no more. There are opportunities; we have to embrace them. And there is nothing unreasonable in this definition of time that is given in connection with religious exercises. If the agriculturist can say to the seed sower "It is *too late now!*" if the starter of a railway coach can say to men "You are *too late now!*" if the Post Office can drop its shutters and its doors, and say "*Too late now!*" what, if in a higher realm, in another sphere of thinking and of service, there should be an opportunity, definition of time and calling, and that there should sound out from the Divine spheres the utterance "You are *too late now!*" Does any poor soul ask me when the time is, then, that men may be saved? "*Now* is the accepted time: *now* is the day of salvation."

I have seen men pursuing railway journeys who have mistaken the station, and got out before they had reached their journey's end. They have been going from north to south, and have got out two-thirds of the way, and the train has gone on without them. It is possible, brethren, for a man to live forty years of a Christian life, and then to get out at some way-side station, and to be left there, and never to reach the metropolis of the universe.

"Where is he?"

"He was left behind."

"Why, he said he was coming!"

"So he did, but he got out at a little station on the road, and we have not seen him since."

"Well, but he took his ticket: he took his seat; he knew where he was going."

"Quite true; but, somehow or other, he got out, and is not here. That is the sad fact."

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Men do get out at the wrong place—men do get out, and don't get in again! What if some of us should live to advanced years in the Christian course, and should then get out, and never be able to recover our forfeited position! We must never get out in any permanent sense until we have reached the great City, whose streets are gold, and whose walls are jasper; and, once there, we shall go out no more for ever. Yes, and you young men may get out very early on the journey, and never get in again. Not long ago a young man called upon me to ask me questions about theology and about preaching, and about pulpit styles and methods, and so forth; and I had a long and frank talk with him upon these questions. Not many hours after that a policeman called at my house, to ask me, at that young man's request, to go down and see him in a police cell. I went early in the morning, and found the poor wretch there; he had been suddenly tempted—the devil had come down upon him like an unexpected storm. He got out—he went before the magistrates, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. "But three months—that will soon be over." The magistrate said, "Three months." Society says "For ever." Society never forgives. Society blots out of its theologic creed the doctrine of eternal punishments, and then turns round and inflicts the penalty upon its own offenders. Yes, young men, you may get out for three months, but if you do, you will never probably, *probably* never get in again. Let those who have ears to hear hear, and may God give them understanding!

O Thou good Shepherd, who didst give Thy life for the sheep, we humbly beseech Thee to pursue us by Thy mercy, until we be safely enfolded beyond the reach of all ravenous beasts. We have not gone where Thy love cannot find us, for Thy love is as Thine own infinitude and eternity. It shines in all light; it breathes upon us through the folds of the darkness itself; it besets us behind and before. Our hearts are weary of their wanderings; and they have run after rest, and have not found it. They have eagerly pursued promised joy, and they have been afflicted with cruel hunger, and much pain. O Thou who lovest man, and who didst signify Thy love by the great work of the Cross, give us to feel that in all our wanderings Thou art near us; that Thy heart's desire is that all men may be saved. Arrest us in our evil course; save us from the snare of the destroyer, and enable us to turn again unto the living Lord, the eternal Love, and to find rest in Thy heart, Thou dear Christ. We bless Thee that we have found Thee, because Thou didst first find us. May we never be sundered more. Amen.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 30th, 1870.

ON RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"—Acts xix. 2.

Why should not each of us put this question to his own heart as a personal enquiry, as a question that ought to be answered as before God, without equivocation and without self-deception, and without any attempt to deal triflingly with the piercing and all-important interrogative? Let each heart say to itself, "Have I received the Holy Ghost? I profess to have been redeemed by the blood of Christ; my name is to be found on the register of the Church; I have a distinct Christian status; I claim to be a Christian; but have I really, truly, fully received the Holy Ghost, the last, the crowning gift of God's infinite grace?" If we treat the question in this way it will become to us as a judgment seat, and why should we not ever and anon arrest ourselves in the hurry and rush and delirium of life, to ask a question or two that shall pierce the heart, and bring us to a right knowledge and a proper estimation of ourselves. The Divine mediation is a progress. If you will carefully read the Holy Scriptures you will find that God never takes a backward step; all His revelations have in them the spirit of advancement, development, progress. You go back to type and shadow and figure, to gorgeous and intricate ritualism, to forms and ceremonies and richness of observance unparalleled, and such as would have surpassed the power of human fancy to figure out, or dream out for itself. You come on to the Divine Man, the God Christ, and you do not pause there as at a full stop. There the punctuation is only intermediate; there

is something to come after the Divine Son. He Himself said so—distinctly foretold and promised that another should succeed Him; and He calls Him by the loftiest and most endearing titles which can express dignity and graciousness of character. That great One who was to come was called "the Spirit of truth," and then He was called so pathetically, and with such wondrous knowledge of what our hearts needed—He was called "the Comforter." Now, from the beginning to the end, from the outline, the shadow, the type, to this great Spiritual personality, this sovereignty of the Holy Ghost, there has been progress, advancement, culmination; and in all these I see a grandeur most impressive and instructive.

The Divine motion has always been towards spirituality; God has never rested content, so to speak, with the material, the outward, the visible. The sun that is making the summer day for us is only a temporary lamp; and the great temples that we build, with their noble domes and far-ascending spires, like mighty hearts up-lifted in prayer, are only conveniences by the way. And this Holy Book itself is only a school book that we have for the present. And the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are but signs, symbols, set up on the road. The time is coming when there shall be no need of the sun, no need of the moon; when institutionalism shall be lost in spirituality; for the seer said, "I saw no temple therein." Why should we have the sign when we have the substance; and why the poor, cramped letter, imprisoning the infinite wisdom and infinite tenderness of God, when we shall have Himself, and stand before Him evermore in His temple; for He himself is the temple, and there needeth no outward building, no outward light—He is temple, and He is light; and when we stand before Him all that is material, visible, and most helpful by the way, will be no longer necessary.

Shall I pause here to caution some hearers against the possible misinterpretation of my words? Don't let any man run away with the impression that I am undervaluing the house of God. Our houses would be but poor dwelling places were not the temple of God amongst us. Let no man imagine that I am undervaluing the sacraments; we need them; they help us; they recall our wandering memories and our inconstant affections to help us by the way. Especially let no man think that I have said one word which should in any degree impair the authority and the sufficiency of the Divine revelation, the Holy Bible, the Scriptures of God. Yet, with the highest reverence for all these, seeing God in them, believing in them, and deriving help from them, I yet believe that the time will come, in the progress of the Divine plan, when sun, and temple, and moon shall be no longer needed in the light of the Divine countenance, and in the infinite sufficiency of God's own person. So much, however, we may say as indicative of the grand fact

which you students of history and students of men ought to ponder well —that the Divine mediation has been a progress, and is hastening on to a splendid culmination.

Now, are we in the line of that progress, are we as far on as our opportunities have enabled us to be; or are some of us still lingering far behind? Have some of us turned back to the beggarly elements? Have any of us sought to reconstruct the Temple of Solomon, and to revive the wondrous drapery and adornments in which priests were then decorated; or are we getting on becoming more spiritual, freer of the material, closer to the Divine nature? I would that this question could arrest us, and bind us down to itself until we have returned some intelligent and devout answer to its importunity. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" The reception of the Holy Ghost into a man's nature cannot be matter of uncertainty; and I should like to say, with most poignant emphasis, we shall have a drivelling, effete, stupid, and all but blasphemous life—blasphemous by reason of its very insipidity and indifference—if we do not clearly understand this, that a man is not left in doubt as to whether he is born again. It is not matter of debate with the heart whether it has passed through the process called regeneration—whether it has passed from death unto life. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." There may be doubts as to times and circumstances; there may be difficulties in the way of full explanation; there may be sobbing and stammering in the exposition of our religious history; and there may be a timidity which amounts almost to shamefacedness; yet out of all, and through all, there will come this testimony—"Lord, I believe! Help thou mine unbelief." I am not insisting that any man should be able to rise, and with all clearness, and emphasis, and decision, proclaim himself all that he could be expected to be. That were a corrupt Pharisaism, a regeneration from the devil; a being born backwards and downwards, and not being born into life, and light, and liberty. The noblest, the ripest, the grandest member in the Church can hardly venture to mention more than this: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, I press toward the mark"—a continuous endeavour, a never ceasing struggle, an apprehension of an object, and an unconquerable determination to reach it. That is the highest attainment known amongst us to-day. On the other hand, I cannot but feel that there are persons whose testimony is indistinct, and cloudy, and pointless; they make no impression upon those by whom they are surrounded. Their life is spent in an insipid debating as to whether or not they have been really born again. And in reference to them, I say, take heed, friend, lest by this self-analysis and constant debating about yourself you be losing the very object of your life, and be grieving, if not quenching, the

Holy Ghost. And if there can be no doubt about whether a man is possessed of the Holy Ghost or not, there ought to be no possible fear of an indiscriminate and promiscuous mixing up of the Church and the world. There will be broad lines of demarcation. There may not be much profession that is purely verbal, but there will be a life that is self-discriminating; a temper, and a speech, and a behaviour which never can be accounted for by the ordinary canons of human criticism and interpretation. Men shall be given to feel, without our saying so much in words, that we are not of the world; that the evil one hath no place in us; that though yet we are in the flesh, our life is one continual and intense aspiration towards the holiness and perfectness of God. When that influence shall be exercised upon the world, men who talk against Christ will at least be hushed into silence; men who have been timid in their testimony will be loud in their tribute, and those who have done most will feel that they have done nothing.

And it ought further to be said, that in the progress of the Divine life to which we are called we get away little by little from the fleshly and historical Jesus Christ. "We know Christ no more after the flesh," and if any of us foolishly dream that we would be tenderer in our love and devouter in our worship, if the pierced, wounded Christ were to present Himself to our bodily vision, we are yet in bondage, and we know not the sublimity and the freedom of spiritual life. Christ in the flesh would be a continual stumbling-block. Christ in the flesh would divide the Church; there would be contention about Him, and a thousand difficulties would be invited where one difficulty was supposed to have been met. It is of God's infinite wisdom and grace that He has taken away the fleshly and visible Christ, and poured out upon His Church the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of worship, and the Spirit of comfort.

What then, are we no longer disciples of Christ? Is Christ a name clean gone for ever, except on the pages of history? Is the Son of God dismissed from His own sanctuary; and are we no longer to dwell upon the Name that is music, and the Cross that is emancipation? "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will not speak of Himself." He has not come to be a self-expositor—"He shall teach concerning me; He shall take things that are mine, and shall show them unto you. He shall fill up the measure that I must leave deficient; because, though I have many things to say unto you, yet ye cannot bear them now." So then this Holy Ghost is an interpreter of Christ; He enlarges Christ before the vision of our love; He increases our capacity to entertain Christ in the hospitality of our hearts; He increases the halo—the nimbus of glory that is around the head of the Saviour, till we see Him in the perfectness of His essential glory. We do not leave Christ; we get nearer to Him. We do not leave the Gospels, we get more and more deeply into the Gospel. It is true we do get power over the letter which

we had not in the absence of the full baptism of the Holy Ghost. We see things in the letter and beyond the letter which we never saw before. The letter is no longer to us final as to the glory and perfectness and Godhead of the blessed Christ. And we cannot express all that we see in the letter and beyond it. Many a time our eloquence becomes silence; our inspiration becomes a cry, a groan, that cannot be uttered in human articulation so that others can understand. You know what this is. You have had such visions of Christ as have caused you to overflow with love. You have felt love within you as a river that has burst its banks and deluged your very nature. It was by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Your glimpses, your visions, you wished them to abide there; but no, they passed on, and yet after they had gone, their very memory was to you inspiration, strength, and heaven in pledge. We shall never get away from Christ. "Without me ye can do nothing;" but we shall never understand Christ fully until we are taught by the indwelling, all illuminating, and all vitalizing Holy Ghost." "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"

What is the one decisive sign by which we may know whether we have received the Holy Ghost? Is it to be a mere sentiment, an impression upon the mind, a religious hope; or is it to be something more decisive, emphatic, and incontrovertible? Do you ask a question? I am prepared with a reply. What is the one decisive sign that a man has received the Holy Ghost? Let me approach that question through two others. Have you received the poetic spirit? How do you prove it? Not by prose, but by poetry. Have you received the heroic spirit? How do you prove it? Not by cowardice, not by craven-heartedness, but by adventure—by freely encountering peril in all its thousand forms and possibilities of visitation. Have you received the Holy Spirit? The decisive sign is love of holiness—not power of theological debate, not only contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, not only outwardly irreproachable character, but love of holiness—not reputation, but reality; a heart that pants after the holiness of God—life concentrated into one burning prayer to be sanctified, body, soul, and spirit—life a sacrifice on God's altar—that is what I mean by saying that holiness is the one decisive test of our having received the Holy Ghost. Alas! are not some professing Christians afraid to say the word "holy?" I find this in the course of my study of human nature, and my intercourse with men, as a pastor and as a teacher of divine truth, that I should be almost startled if I heard some men say the word "holy." It seems such a foreign word to them—as if it would be out of place on their lips; and it is amazing with what cunning legerdemain many persons will express their religious experience without using religious expression. They "hope;" they "assent;" they would "fain believe;" they are

"not without some idea" that so-and-so may be the case; but a rich, ripe, unctuous, emphatic expression of Christian experience would be from their lips almost an anti-climax, if not a profanity. Brethren, we are not called upon to do with as little Christianity as possible; it is not "Just get over the line and that will do;" it is this, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect; be ye holy as God is holy." This is the vocation to which we are called, and if, when men ask us if we have received the Holy Spirit, we only answer them by some theological mystery, which neither they nor we can understand, then we lie not unto men but unto the Holy Ghost.

And holiness is a word which may perhaps require, in the case of some hearers, a brief analysis, that they may clearly understand what is meant by holiness. There must in holiness be love of truth—truth as truth—not truth as an investment, not truth as the readiest answer for the passing occasion, not truth as a palladium to save from some menace that is much dreaded, but love of truth as truth—truth in doctrine, truth in spirit, truth in life, truth in conversation. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, and where there is love of truth there will, as consequent elements of holiness, be love of righteousness—pure, simple, absolute, infinite righteousness. Things will be done in life, not because they are convenient, but because they are right. Men will be prepared at any moment for crucifixion, if crucifixion be their lot, as the servants of righteousness. There will be no quibbling, no equivocation, no giving of false expressions, no deceitfulness of life; but outspoken, direct, unimpeachable love of right. And then there will be also love of worship. Life itself will be a continuous liturgy. All our life will be holiness unto the Lord. Worship will not be with us a strange exercise: it shall be to our mouth as sweetness, to our heart as love, to the hunger of our being and its thirst as bread and water. We shall not have to come to worship as if we we were going to something that is remote; we shall always be worshipping. Our whole body, soul, and spirit will be an offering of praise, and an expression of trust towards God.

Is it so with us as we come to God's house, if there were nothing there but prayer and psalmody—worship in that particular form; or is there not too much amongst us of the spirit which says, "We shall be in time enough for the sermon, and we do not care about the preliminaries?" The preliminaries! Let the King be dismissed, and let the servant come forth! Let heaven be shut up, and earth open its unclean lips! Let the great Light be quenched, and some artificial jets be substituted! Is it so? When we have received the Holy Ghost we shall tarry long in prayer, and think the time was nothing; we shall utter much song, and be ashamed and distressed when the music has ceased. Have you received the Holy Ghost? And can you testify to its reception by the answer of a holy life—a spirit of holiness unto the Lord? Brethren, I

feel in putting this question I am putting a sword through my own heart, and cleaving and piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow of my own nature, as well as yours. I tremble lest any man should run away with the impression that in putting these inquiries I myself am able to answer them satisfactorily. It is not so: and if there has been aught rough and urgent and apparently too dogmatic in my tone, it is not that I have attained and speak from certain success and eminence; it is that I feel the necessity of getting on, and of being more deeply and livingly identified with God the Holy Ghost. You see that ship there, with the sails clinging as it were to the timbers, just drooping, without any flutter in them at all, and the vessel is not stirring, is not making progress. Wait. The wind is rising, the breeze is coming, the sails are flapped out and filled, and away goes the vessel. She hath received the breath of heaven. Come, O Breath of the four winds, and breathe upon us, that we may be getting on over the troubled waters, and hastening to our desired haven! You see these poor drooping flowers, folded up as if hiding themselves from some enemy. Poor chilled little things! They are beautiful, but they dare not show themselves. Wait a moment. There is an arrow of light breaking through the gloom; the sun is coming with his benediction, coming with his invitation, coming with his life, and these little chilled things begin to unfold themselves, and to say to the sun, "Here we are! Thou hast made us thus beautiful!" O Spirit of the living God, baptize us with fire, give us the warmth without which there is no life! See the thirsty fields; to-day cracked, crumbling into sand, cattle complaining, sheep bleating for water and for nourishment. There are great gaps in the earth. The sun has been too fierce upon this little handful of dust we call our land. Wait. There is a cloud about the size of a man's hand to be seen in the distant sky: it increases, spreads, darkens, deepens, breaks—and rich rains fall down, and the thirsty place is satisfied, and hastens to express its thanks in bringing forth abundantly, that there may be food for man and beast. O Thou who art compared unto water, pour out thyself upon us, lest thine inheritance be scorched and burnt up, and there be no content, nor plenty, nor prosperity in our Churches! Have we received the Holy Ghost? If not, ours is but an empty profession, and our loudest declarations are echoes, not voices, and they will come back upon us without bringing any blessing. May I ask that each of you will join me in special importunity of prayer that we may receive the Holy Ghost!

THE PRAYER.

Almighty God, Thou givest the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Thee: we ask Thee now for that most blessed gift. Blessed Spirit, dwell with us, and our heart shall be full of joy. Gracious Teacher, abide with us, and we shall be led into all truth; we shall enter upon the inheritance of the saints in light. Gracious Comforter, make thine abode in our hearts; interpret our sorrow; show us all the meaning of our tears, lest our grief be too much for us and we be swallowed up, and there be no recovery to our souls. O Thou who lovest us as we have never loved ourselves, we pray Thee to show unto us the riches of Thy grace, as shown in the person and work of our only, our ever-blessed, and infinitely-sufficient Saviour. Wash us in His precious blood, and there shall be no stain upon us. Fill us with His spirit, and we shall be perfect as Thou art perfect. Pour a double portion of Thy Holy Spirit upon Thy ministering servant. Enable us all to see into the meaning of Thy truth, and to feel profoundly all the mysteries of Thy mercy. Give us the tongue as "the pen of a ready writer." Who hath made man's mouth? Hast not Thou the Lord made it? Do Thou touch our lips as with a live coal from off the altar. Inflame our hearts with unquenchable zeal. Illuminate us with the blessed light that can never fade away. May our testimony be simple, true, emphatic, unchanging, and through us may the world believe on Him whom Thou hast sent. Draw all churches to Thyself, redeemed with blood named in the covenant which Thou hast made with Messiah. Let grace, mercy, and peace abide, and may the Church be mighty for good—an all-penetrating and all-pervasive light, that the world may know that Thou hast saved us by the Cross of Christ. Sanctify us in all the relations of life. Preserve our life so long as may be expedient for Thy purpose in the world. May each of us labour according to his own gifts, and serve diligently in the sphere whereunto Thou hast called him; and at last may we meet as an assembly of souls, active in Thy service, yet never weary of the work, renewed by Thy life, animated by Thy grace, and rendered hopeful by Thy redeeming Spirit! If the King hear us when we cry, then shall our prayer prevail through Him whom Thou hearest alway. Amen.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 7th, 1870.

ON LYING UNTO THE HOLY GHOST.

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?"—Acts v. 3.

Last Thursday our subject was "Receiving the Holy Ghost." To-day we prosecute the same subject, and call attention to the possibility and the awful consequences of lying to the Holy Ghost. The words which I have just quoted were uttered by the Apostle Peter when Ananias came to him, laid down a certain sum at his feet, and professed that the amount which he thus brought was the entire result of the sale of the property which he had intended to give to the common fund of the Church. Ananias laid down the part, and said it was the whole. Peter thereupon inquired, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" And afterward he said, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." So that if we put these two passages together, there can be no doubt or difficulty as to Peter's doctrine respecting the personality and Godhead of the Holy Ghost. I do not see why we need go one step from the incident itself in order to find the very first illustration and the first lesson afforded by this most solemn and pathetic subject. Here is a man who professes to make a donation to the Church. He says, "This is all;" and while he said it was the whole proceeds, he knew in his heart it was only a part of the price. That is not a merely historic incident; that is not merely something that occurred hundreds of years ago, and rests upon the page of history without modern example, or illustration, or similitude: there are amongst us to-day men who have brought the part and said it was the whole, and before the very altar of the sanctuary they have perjured their own hearts. Do not let us imagine that the peculiarity of the details affects in any degree the essential value of the principle which underlies them. We have no community of goods; we are not altogether as were the early Christian disciples; and it is possible, by the cunning of our hearts,

that we may seek to escape from the lessons of the text by some of these considerations. Do not let us trifle with ourselves in that way. Here is a principle—the principle of the possibility of lying to the Holy Ghost—and we are bound to face that principle, and to try ourselves by it as by the flame of the Lord's own fire. How is it with you? You said, when you came to London, a poor young man, that if the Lord would open your way in life—that if you could get a situation, if it was only at the rate of a pound a week to begin with, you would be thankful to God, and you would remember His service all the days of your life. And you had the situation, and you had your pound a week to begin with, and it increased from one pound to two, and from two pounds to ten, and from ten to some higher figure. Did you carry out your vow? You said you would give at least one-tenth to the Lord's service. Have you given a tithe of your income to the service of the Christian kingdom? Did you not say, when you got your very first sovereign, that two shillings out of a pound was a good deal to give, and that perhaps, considering your poverty, one might be enough? Thou didst not lie unto men, but unto the Holy Ghost! You made a vow—you made it in the name of God. In that vow you covenanted concerning your service in relation to the Christian kingdom, and you began to nibble at the vow, to mitigate the bond, to take out of the covenant certain of its essential elements, and to-day you are accused on the very floor of the temple of God with having lied unto the Holy Ghost. I say, that is a possible case. I am not urging an indictment against any individual man in particular, but I am giving personality to a principle, and showing a grand, solemn, heartrending truth, that some of us may, even in this way, as did Ananias and Sapphira, lie unto the Holy One.

Nor is it any different in principle with you, who, when a young man and just introduced into the Church, held very lofty and pure language concerning Christian consecration and service. You said that you would never (health permitting) be absent from the sanctuary, you would never be niggardly and grudging in your attention to claims that were urged upon you; you would be noble in spirit, serene in temper, magnanimous in disposition; you would be as a flame of fire in the Church, you would know nothing of censoriousness and bigotry and littleness; you would grow in holiness and in the fear of God, and all men should know of a surety, through you, that Christ in you was the hope of man's glory. And you did rejoice us when you said so. We took heart again when we heard a young man's voice utter such music as that. We said, "Yes, the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation, and our hope is in the young;" and we referred to your vow of consecration, and were made glad and strong in it many a time, when our heart would have fainted and our hands hung down. How is it with you to-day? Have you kept the vow? Have you been as prayerful, as truthful, as devout, as honourable, as strong, as pure, as we had some reason to expect from the comprehensiveness and intensity of your vow? You made a vow in secret. If I have given language to your vow now, it is only language of suggestion and not a quotation, because you made the vow in secret. You went into your room, you shut the door, you prayed to your Father in secret, and when you were startled in the exercise, you rose and appeared as a man who had not been praying. You fasted, and yet you anointed your

head, and washed your face, so that no man knew of your hunger. How is it with you to-day? Have you grown accordingly, or did the first chill of worldly association numb you? Did you fall before the very first assault of the enemy? How is it with you to-day? A man cannot be carrying in his heart a thousand broken vows without feeling himself bowed down in the substance and quality of his manhood—an enfeebled, emasculated, and useless creature. "Thou didst not lie unto men, but unto God."

And the same holds good with regard to the whole sphere of worship. The possibility of a man telling a lie in prayer ought often to strike us dumb in the midst of our most elaborate devotions. A man may be telling lies unto the Holy Ghost in singing his hymn, his morning psalm. A man may never speak, and yet be telling lies unto God, bowing down before him in the posture of reverence, when the heart is far away from him, looking good and being bad in the house of God, and yet the heart and the thoughts wandering away to the ends of the earth. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The minister might feel somewhat of a coldness coming from thine indifference, or restlessness, or misbehaviour, but the insult did not rest with him; thou didst not insult man, thou didst insult the Holy Ghost.

And what is true in worship is true in all the services of the Church. When a man does something under a great profession of godliness, and yet all the while is making standing-room for himself, then is he lying unto God. When a man gives a little as though he were giving much, he lies not unto men, but unto the Holy Ghost. When a man, who ought to lead in the church, in its devotion and in its liberality, lags behind and deprives the church of the influence of his example and stimulus, he is not inflicting some little human injury, he is not thrusting a weapon into the skin of a mortal foe. He seeks, covertly indeed, and with abundance of protestation to the contrary, to plunge the steel into the very heart of God. We shall err in our whole worship and service if we imagine that our whole service in the Church terminates upon human elements and human considerations. When Ananias spoke to Peter, Peter said to him in effect, "I am not thine interlocutor; I do but stand before thee visibly. The Interlocutor is in heaven, and that lie which thou hast told does not rest in my heart. It goes forward and grieves the Holy Ghost."

And is it not also the same with us who are ministers of the Gospel? Do we not feel this more keenly, if possible, than any other Christian professors, because we recall the time of our first consecration, and the memory of that hallowed time smites us as with a rod, brings us to tears, and to the most poignant sorrow and anguish. When we were brought to Christ we gave ourselves no rest till we sought an opportunity of becoming Christian teachers. We said in our secrecy, "If ever we are allowed to ascend a Christian pulpit our theme shall be the Cross, our watchword shall be, 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" We said we would labour for the conversion of men, we would call men to the Saviour with no indistinctness of sound; there shall be in our ministry simplicity, emphasis, unction, we shall be in the church as Christ himself—his ambassadors and representatives. It was a holy vow, a noble resolution,

and in the strength of it we went many days. How is it with us now, after having been ten years in the ministry, or twenty, or thirty? How oftentimes have we turned a sentence upon our manuscript and said, "That is very beautiful." How many times have we written for our own artistic taste! How often have we examined our productions only in the lower light, the wretched and deceptive twilight of merely human criticism! How many grand efforts we have put forth for the elevation of our own name! And we have forgotten the Saviour, and we have made many an endeavour to say something that was not in the New Testament, and to preach anything but the Gospel, and we have said to ourselves, "We must be abreast of the time; we must preach up to the age," as if the old Cross had fallen back, and was no longer in sympathy with the progress and the necessity of manhood. God forbid that I should say this about any brother, that I should make any charge about any man. I feel this in my own ministry, and may therefore claim to say it—a temptation to get away from the great central, vital, all-dominating themes, and to dwell on some wretched trivialities which do not matter in the slightest degree whether they are true or false. There is a tendency to go into artificialism, and to leave nature, and to give people husks when they perish for bread. I want therefore to say this much, earnestly, and with heart-tears, in order that some of us may have an opportunity of examining ourselves whether we have been lying unto the Holy Ghost. This I know of a truth, and can say without quotation, with the confirmation of my own experience, that I never do come back to the great central line, and stand under the great transcendent fact of all history—the gift of the Son of God—without those who hear me being touched and quickened and blest, and helped in some way or other, not, it may be, through the fancy, or the imagination, or the intellect, but through the heart, through the emotions, through some line of practical life, God sealing the testimony and approving still the proclamation of the vital and unchanging truth of the Gospel. Sad and terrible will be the end, if we find when we go forward towards the place of judgment that all our lifetime we have been lying unto the Holy Ghost, saying things we did not believe, filling up the time that we might be decent, and professing earnestness where the heart felt no pain, no love, no urgent and tormenting solicitude.

Man lies unto the Holy Ghost, when he represses the deepest convictions of his nature. If any man have a conviction of a right course, and hesitate to pursue that course because of possible evil consequences, he lies unto the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is in every man, more or less; He bears witness in every heart, and if a man shall quench his convictions of right, be they political, or social, or educational, or religious, he lies unto the Holy Ghost that is within him; he dishonours the Spirit of truth. A man lies unto the Holy Ghost when he proceeds upon the policy that the end will justify the means—when he says, "This is not a profession I should have chosen upon moral grounds; I do not like my trade; I do not like my way of getting money; at the same time, a man must live, and when I do realize results I shall appropriate those results in a good direction." When a man allows himself to talk so, he is a liar before God. He proceeds upon the fallacy that "a man must live." Now, there is no greater error in practical

reasoning than that. It is not at all necessary that a man must live. "Man shall not live by bread alone." There is a higher life than the life of your flesh. It ought to be necessary for a man to speak the truth, but not to be necessary for him to live. Here then is a danger which I wish to point out to myself and to others whom it may concern. We say, "The end will sanctify the means." We say, "We anticipate results, and all will depend upon our appropriation of those results." You are wrong in your reasoning, and you are criminal in your morality. Let a man get what he does get honestly. Let him be able to hold it up, and let the sun stream through it, and let him be able to see that there be no crack or flaw or blemish in it. Let him walk before God and man with sincerity, and honesty, and self-reliance, and yet mistrust; and whatsoever be the consequences, he will in his heart be rich, and great, and prosperous, and happy.

Why do I insist on this view of the case? For this reason. It is possible for some who hear me to say, "Well, if this be the case, we shall abandon the sanctuary, we shall get away from the Christian standard, and have nothing to do with the profession of Christianity, and then we shall escape the charge of lying to the Holy Ghost. You are wrong; the Holy Ghost is not shut up in the sanctuary; the Holy Ghost is as much in architecture as He is in religious thinking; the Holy Ghost presides as truly over your agriculture as He does over your prayer-meetings. You cannot get away from the Holy Ghost by banging the chapel door, and running away into the streets, and hiding yourselves in the warehouse. There is no truth that is peculiarly religious as truth; there is no justice that is distinctively Divine as justice. Truth is truth in the market place; and in the Church justice is justice, whether it be presiding over the Cross, or whether it be regulating our instincts and our daily lives. If we make these wretched, fallacious, and misleading divisions, then our life will be a failure, without coherence, without dignity, without a divine centre and a divine destiny. You lie to the Holy Ghost when you tell a man behind your counter, "This is ten yards long," when it is only nine and a half. You lie not unto men, but unto the Holy Ghost; and when you tell some unsophisticated customer from the country, "This is a new fashion," when you know it is an old one, do not go into your back parlour, and eat up the dinner that will make you more hungry than ever, and chuckle over the fact that you, an old shopkeeper, have told the party in question that it was quite new. It may be a clever trick in trade; it may have added a few coppers to your rotten till, but thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. Many men imagine that it is only on theological subjects that they can lie unto the Holy Ghost, but they offend Him with their lives. The Holy Ghost pervades human life, pervades human society, penetrates all the reticulations and network of human life and human intercourse; and even in our so-called secular work we may be as truly lying against the Holy Ghost as when we tell falsehoods in our solemn devotions.

This makes life a very serious business. If the Holy Ghost occupied any special department of life, then we might flee away from Him; but still the question torments evil consciences, and wrings the hearts of men who wish to escape into godless solitude, "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? The wings of the morning cannot bear me away from Thy

sight; those dread, burning eyes look upon me wherever I am. There is no depth in the sea, there is no bed in hell, there is no eminence beyond the stars, where Thy presence is not a torment and a judgment, a criticism and a terrible plague."

I hold, then, that a true exposition of these words of the text forces upon us two solemn facts. One is that we have two lives; we have an outward life and an inward life; a life of speech made for the public ear, and a life of thinking, of which we ourselves are alone the auditors. Terrible is that power of concealment—to be able to stand before a man, and to smile at him when you in your heart are seeking out a place in which you may smite him! A dread power to be bowing the head as if in worship, and yet for the heart to be entertaining with lavish hospitality the worst devils that can fill the human soul! The two lives will not show ourselves to one another as we are; and more than this, and worse than this, we dare not show ourselves to ourselves. There are times when we would run away from some aspect of ourselves, that we catch, as it were, suddenly and unexpectedly. We say, "No, that cannot be me, that cannot be my life! That cannot be my heart. I want to run away from that!" And sometimes we talk in order to keep down the inward voice; sometimes we make our outward speech loud, resonant, and emphatic, that we may still the pleader that puts in a word for God.

And the next fact is, that there is a time of revelation coming upon all human life. We have had hints of this revelation all through the Divine testimony written in the Scriptures. You remember when Gehazi followed Naaman, regretting that his master had spared him. When the well-controlled man came back, and entered into his master's presence, and looked as if he had not been doing anything particular, his master said to him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" and Gehazi said, "Thy servant went no whither"—said it without a tremor in his voice, without a blush on his cheek; said it with childlike innocence. What was the answer? "Went not mine heart after thee?" When Ananias said unto Peter, This is the whole proceeds—the whole result of the sale of my property, Peter said unto him, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto the Holy Ghost." "That which is spoken in secret shall be heard on the housetops;" that which we do in darkness shall be done over again, as it were, in the light; that which we have spoken in a whisper shall be taken up in thunder, and sent throughout the universe with ever-multiplying reduplication, until not a devil in hell or an angel in heaven shall be ignorant of our whole spiritual history. A man ought every now and then to face that fact. If he cannot be governed by higher considerations, he ought to allow himself to be lashed as far towards virtue as he can with the scorpion thong of fear; he ought to say to himself, "This will be known one day; all this will be published that I am doing now so cleverly and covertly; it will all be known." Mayhap a reflection of that kind—which is not the highest reflection—which does not partake of the very highest quality of instruction, or doctrine, or impulse, may bring him to other reflections that will terminate in higher thinking and in diviner results. Only the true man will stand. When Ananias heard that, what was the consequence? "He gave up the ghost." That is a history in a sentence, a revelation

in a breath. When Ananias heard that, he was not slain with steel, he was not executed on some ecclesiastical gallows, he was not dragged to prison and allowed to pine out a wretched existence, but instantly it was made known to him that the Spirit of truth had been insulted, and that he had lied unto the Holy Spirit of God, he fell down and was no more a man. There is a destiny for the liar! That is the end of your clever courses, your splendid strokes in dishonourable business. A man may keep back part of the price, and that which he has kept back of his own little private property will be the condemnation and the ruin of his life. What we want then is truth in the inward parts. Let a man openly stand forward and say, "I could give you all this, but I shall only give you a little part of it." He is an honest man. When a man comes and says, "Take this gift: it is all I have," and yet behind it there lies somewhat which he has kept in reserve, then he is prepared for the terrible destiny of Ananias and Sapphira.

Only truth can stand; there will be a time in the universe when all liars shall be cast into a lake of fire. They shall be burnt up, and nothing shall be found but the truth of God. How can a man be true? Only by Christ, only by being crucified with Christ, only by knowing in his heart what Jesus meant when he said, "I am the truth." A man cannot do this of his own strength, cannot call himself right up to the high level of Divine veracity and integrity and purity. God knowing this, has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. God knowing this, has sent forth into the world this Gospel; through Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of sins published to every creature. So it is no use our going back and trying to do what we have left undone. No man can get into his yesterdays. When the day goes it sets up a barrier, and you cannot get back to it. If God had not any power of going back, then must our life remain in its rottenness and evil and perversity, and all its abomination and untruthfulness. But God has this power of going back upon a man's life—beginning with him, as it were, upon his very first breath, and pursuing him with his love, and offering him through all the difficulties and sorrows of his being the one sufficient answer, the answer of Christ's work and Christ's love. What manner of persons ought we to be!—the Holy Ghost listening to us—God watching us. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." "Be sure your sins will find you out." God setteth our secret sins in the light of His countenance, and forgets nothing. He brings up the whole history of our life, and lets fall upon it the revealing glory of his own righteousness. Surely we ought, if there be truth in these reflections, to hasten to God's feet and to abide there till we have implored, and implored successfully, the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour.

O THOU that searchest the heart and triest the reins of the children of men, search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting. The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Who can hide himself from God? Though the rocks fall upon us, and the mountains cover us, and the darkness doth enclose us in its most secret places, yet dost thou search and try us as a flame of fire. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Thou art a Spirit, and thou searchest the spirits of men. Who then can stand before God, and who dare say, "Let the Most High look upon me?" In Thy holiness we see our own guilt; in the light of Thy countenance we realize the darkness of our own way. Thou didst set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance, and Thine heart doth go after us when we pursue that which is evil. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we have come to say, "God be merciful to us sinners through Jesus Christ our infinitely sufficient Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin." Thou wilt hear this prayer; Thou wilt allow it to prevail mightily with Thee, for Thou canst not turn away from Thy dear Son and the presence of His cross. We humbly beseech thee to search us as with the candle of the Lord. Reveal us unto ourselves, that we may know ourselves as we really are. When Thou hast afflicted us and humbled us, and expelled from our heart every vain hope of self-emancipation, do Thou bring us with the infinite graciousness of Thy love to know the mystery of the liberty of the sons of God. Amen.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 14th, 1870.

ON GRIEVING AND QUENCHING THE HOLY GHOST.

"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God."—Eph. iv. 30.
"Quench not the Spirit."—1 Thess. v. 19.

If language has any meaning, it must be clear from these words that the Apostle had no doubt whatever of the personality of the Holy Ghost. You cannot grieve an impersonal substance, nor can you grieve a merely spiritual influence. Where grief is possible there must be intelligent agency, and intelligent agency is perhaps the simplest and the best definition of personality. Not only, however, must there be intelligent agency, there must be something more and something deeper. You can hardly say with propriety that you have grieved a man's intellect: you may dishonour his intellect; you may insult his mind; you may stultify his mental conceptions and propositions; but you can hardly be said to grieve a man's intelligence. There must, therefore, be heart. You grieve the heart; you alienate the affections; you wound the sensibilities. So that we find in the Holy Ghost not only the highest intelligence, but the highest sensibility; not only a mind of life, but a heart of love; not only Divine powers of conception and origination of thought, but a more than motherly heart, a more than womanly love. Now, the fact that the Holy Spirit is capable of being grieved shows how intimately He has identified Himself with our best life. That He should permit Himself to be grieved by anything that we, the creatures of a day, can do, is in itself most wonderful and most pathetic. That He should condescend to take so much interest in our poor human life, the little flying day which we call our lifetime, is itself suggestive of much that is deeply tender and pathetic in the intercourse which is maintained between the divine and the human. What do we care about those that are afar off, whether their actions be pleasant or unpleasant —whether they be moral or vicious. But when you are told that a certain child has done wrong, you instantly feel, if you know the parent of the child, that the wound inflicted on the parental heart must be very

acute and deep. You express pity for the parent, because of the closeness of the relation subsisting between the person who has done wrong and the person who will suffer most deeply from that wrong. The parent mourns over his wandering, prodigal child. The mother spends her days in thought and her nights in prayer, when she thinks of her boy that is far away from that which is right and pure and true and good. Her heart is grieved. She could not grieve so much over anybody else's boy : it is over her own child that she melts in tenderness, and that she trembles almost with hopelessness. And if there be any truth at all in this human analogy, it does give us views of the tenderness, the sensibility, the love of the divine, which we could not otherwise obtain. That the Holy Ghost is grieved with us at all, is, I repeat, a suggestion of the depth of tenderness that is in God, which is unfathomable and inexpressible. Why does He not put his foot upon us and crush us out of existence? Why does He allow one pang to afflict His heart, when by the doubling up of His fist He might crush the universe into death? And yet it doth please Him to gather us as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings ; it doth please Him to say, that when women have forgotten their sucking children, even then He will not forget us.

I find in these reflections, if I may so express myself, higher and more conclusive proofs of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, than in any merely intellectual or philosophical argument. It is when I get near the heart of God that I feel the greatness of His nature, and the sacredness of the life which He has given.

And then, by reason of the very nature of the Holy Spirit, it must be by spiritual offences that He is grieved, or by offences that are spiritual, rather than by outward, visible, and actual, as between man and man, or as judged by social standards. He is a spirit, and therefore He deals with our spirit. He does not wait until the thought becomes an act, until He is grieved. His sorrow does not take place merely when the overt act is committed in the face of society. He knoweth our thought afar off, ere we fully comprehend it ourselves—in its remotest, earliest inceptivity, when we could not define it to our own consciousness—when it is not ripe for speech—even in its rudest form. He knows it then, sees the beginning of it, sees all the operations in the mind— how it comes to assert the mastery over us—until it comes to be the supreme desire of our nature, and then it leaps out into some vicious and terrible act. But He was grieved with it long before it reached its climacteric point. He saw it afar off : its inception gave Him sorrow ; its progress deepened His anguish. It is important, therefore, for us to remember that judgment does not begin with our handy-work. The highest and most terrible judgment is the judgment

that is occasioned by our innermost life. It is what we are in motive—what we are in the deepest secrets of our experience—that touches the Holy Ghost, that moves the Divine life and thought and affection. It is impurity of motive which afflicts the Holy Ghost. The action itself may be good, and yet He may be grieved with it, by reason of its animating motive. We may do a right deed in the face of society, and that right deed may be set down against us in God's register as a crime. Actions may be relatively good, and yet essentially bad There may be an act of charity done with an uncharitable motive; and if the light that is in a man be darkness, how terrible is that darkness! Let a man falter in the constancy of his affection towards great principles, divine truths, righteous policies, and though he may never breathe a word of his heart-staggering, yet the Holy Ghost is grieved by the infidelity of his love. The outward conduct may be as it ever was. Attendance upon means of grace may be as regular as before. On the outward man there may be no scar, no blemish, nor flaw, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing, yet he may have gone down in his soul; his spiritual sensibilities may have become blunted; his highest instincts may have been dulled, dishonoured, and all but killed; and it is there in that inner life that never can be published, that intense spiritual life without which manhood is impossible, that the Holy Ghost is grieved, sorrow-stricken, filled with such anguish as only divinity can feel or understand.

So then this forces us into very close quarters with ourselves. It puts an end to all self-trifling; it drives us away as with indignation from a judgment of that which is merely external and social. It asks us, What is our innermost life? - what is there in our heart of hearts?—not what is there painted on the wall, but what is there nestling and brooding in the soul? The Word of God is "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." When God searches a man with the flame of His own righteousness, it is not a question of what we have done only, but of what we are, and what we would have done had circumstances been more favourable. Poor are the biographies which the best friend can write of his departed companion. He can but tell his deeds. Poor are the diaries which men write about themselves. After they have written their journals they are more remarkable for the absence of the deepest spiritual life than for its presence. Only the Holy Ghost can judge a man's interior life thoroughly, profoundly, justly. What some of us would have been if we could have had our own way in the world! If we could have been sure of perfect secrecy, how many evil things we would have done! If we could be covenanted with the darkness that not a single ray of light should ever come through it, what would our

life have been then! If we could have smitten men dumb, and sealed their lips for ever in silence regarding our conduct, how would we have acted then! If nobody would ever have known about it, how much deeper should we have thrust these covetous hands into the property of other people! If there had been no fear of social judgment before our eyes, how much more would we have grudged the hireling his hire, and oppressed the weak man in his weakness! It is there, then, at the back of all our social life, before ever we begin to shape our thoughts into actions, that the Holy Ghost takes notice of us, and is either grieved with us or rejoices over us with Divine gladness.

The exhortation is, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" and if we are not to grieve a *Holy* Spirit, we ourselves must be holy. Observe, we are called upon not to grieve a spirit that is holy—not a spirit that is merely mighty, majestic, glorious, but holy, true, pure, righteous, without sin, and without possibility of sin. It is the *Holy* Spirit that is not to be grieved, and, therefore, the exhortation calls us to the highest moral life, the loftiest spiritual homage and consistency. "Grieve not;" be mindful of Him; consider Him in the whole of your life. Ask, How will this bear upon Him? Let your thought and your desire be one continuous consultation of His holiness. This is the vocation wherewith we are called.

Brethren, if this be so at all, it makes life a very solemn and tormenting experience. Considering that the whole stress of our nature is set in another direction—considering that innumerable temptations are constantly importuning us—not enticing us now and again, but bearing down upon us with determination, watching us in our weakest moments, and pausing until we are off our guard for a single instant, and then rushing upon us with determined malignity—considering these things, I say, our life becomes to us, if we live in the highest mood, oftentimes not only a joy, but a torment and an awful distress. Yes, you will find this, my young Christian friends, as you get on in life, that the more life you have, the more capability of pain you have; the nearer you get to God, the more terrible will be some of the hours in your Christian experience; the more you grow in holiness, the more will you be troubled by the things which are around about you, but which now hardly give you any uneasiness at all. Growth in divine life is not only growth in divine joys, it is growth in pain; it is growth in torment, because growth in sensibility and growth in the highest capacity. But, blessed be God, there is a torment that is joy, there is an agony which is rapture; and as we increase in our capability of feeling pain from spiritual causes, we increase also in capacity for receiving God into our hearts, guesting and tabernacling the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So I would not

give up one element of life. I know that the more life, the more pain; I know the nearer an animal, the less pain; the more of the bestial that is in us, the less capacity there is of suffering the highest torments; but we are taught, having been slain with Christ and having been raised with Him in the power of His resurrection, that it is better to suffer such anguish as redeemed spiritual life can suffer, than to content ourselves with the empty, treacherous, mocking joys which the devil provides for those who are swiftly withering into his own image.

And then we are exhorted, not only not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, we are also exhorted not to "quench" the Spirit. We are called from one side of spiritual watchfulness to another, or to a higher view of the same side.

I want to inquire, in one or two brief sentences, what is meant by quenching the Holy Ghost. It would appear from these words that it is possible for us to stamp out the very last flickering spark of divinity that is within us—that one little glint of fire that saves us from being devils. It would appear from these words that it is possible to erase the very last line of the Divine image that was impressed upon our nature by God himself, and for a man to be just the devil's tenant-at-will—to be the devil's slave—to be at the devil's call. What! can a man be that—a man who can think, plan, scheme, reason, calculate, project, execute great things—a man who is capable of love, of the highest, noblest passion and enthusiasm after virtue and goodness? Is it possible for a man to get down to that point that you really can hardly tell whether he is a man at all? Have you not known cases in which even a mother has turned aside, with such a shudder and horror as only mothers can know, from the child to whom she herself gave birth—no longer a child—a monster, a wretch, a demon, wanting but a touch, and he is gone? Have you not had occasion to give up some of the dearest companionships of your life? You have clung to the very last. You have said, "There is something good in him yet. I shall not break the bruised reed; I shall not quench the smoking flax; I shall yet recover him, and shall have joy in his restoration." And then the hour—the heart-breaking hour—came, when even from your reluctant lips there was forced the decision, "Let him alone; the case is hopeless." We have had such experience in general life; and such experience is but a dim hint of what can be meant by Almighty God, who made man, redeemed man, and who loves man, turning away from him, and saying, "As a son of perdition he must be lost."

Let me guard those who may require to be so guarded from a doctrine that is altogether fallacious and misleading with regard to this matter of quenching the Holy Spirit of God. Some may imagine that

it is a final act, that it is an act complete in itself, that it is done all at once, and done for ever. I do not believe that that is a true representation of the case. I would rather say, on the contrary, that grieving the Holy Ghost is in reality quenching Him, and that the quenching of the Holy Spirit is not one independent act complete in itself, but is an act that expresses, embodies, and terminates a whole series of acts. Here is a man who is animated by a generous impulse. He says, "I see this as I never saw it before, and my reply to it shall be so and so—something noble, liberal;" and he begins by-and-by to reason with himself; and reason always cools the heart I am afraid. I do not know that logic ever made a man much of an enthusiast. I am afraid a good many of us have reasoned ourselves down to zero. However, he comes after a process of reflection to say, "I shall not do what I first said, I shall do something lower—still something good." What is the man doing? He is quenching—quenching the Holy Spirit of generosity and nobleness—not extinguishing it, but quenching it, by grieving it, lowering it, putting it down to some inferior place in his nature; taking out of it the element which would have meant nobility and grandeur of gift and sacrifice. Or here is a man who has made up his mind to an act of self-denial. He says, "I shall no longer continue in this course. I like it, it pleases me in many ways. Nothing gratifies me so much as this; but I shall not do it." And the time comes when he must do it, if he is to do it at all. It is but a few minutes to the hour now, and he says, "I shall not do it. I shall not do it;" and the minutes go one by one, and he says, "I do not think I shall do it;" and the minutes tick themselves away, and it is, "Well, perhaps, if I go this time, and do it just once more, it will not look so abrupt as if I were to do it all at once. I shall do it just this once, and no more. This shall be the last time of my going—I will never go any more;" and he goes, and hell is moved at his going; and if there might be gladness, there is joy in the caverns of darkness. What has the man done? Quenched the Spirit, by grieving it. He still has something of resolution in him; there is still the wreck of the holy vow in his heart; but he has quenched the Holy Ghost in the proportion that he has grieved it. And here is a case of a young Christian, who has started in life with a determination that he will speak a word for Christ whenever opportunity occurs. When he is in secret he quite longs for the opportunity. I know I speak to many hearts when I say so. Some of us have in private even shaped sentences that we thought would be appropriate in such and such cases, which we should be likely to meet with. We have looked over the roll of our friends, and have adapted expressions to this case and to that case, and we have resolved that we should say a word for Christ, not perhaps a very bold word—

certainly not a word that would exalt ourselves at the expense of others; but with a sincere and humble desire we have gone out for the purpose of speaking a word on behalf of Christ and of truth. It is just like many a boy who has gone down to the river to bathe for the first time. He has said how he would do it; how he would take a leap from that point, and go right in at once, and "would not feel it like;" and when he got down—well, he thought he would not do so just then, but by-and-by he would do it. So he went through the whole process of shivering, and shuddering, and trembling, and making a fool of himself, which people do when they ought to do boldly what they do timidly. And the young man with a good Christian vow in his heart feels something come into his throat just when he begins to speak, or when he is about to begin to speak he forgets just what the first word was that he was going to say, and he says to himself, "Now, if I make a bungle there, I know I shall make nothing of it. I think I shall wait for a more convenient season." What is he doing? I hardly like to say it, lest it should fall like a blight on some young beautiful flower that much needs the sunshine; yet, as a matter of truth. I must say it, you are grieving the Spirit, and in that proportion are quenching the Holy Ghost. Don't stifle Divine convictions; don't silence Divine voices that are pleading with your heart for public utterance That is quenching the Holy Ghost. If men would not quench the Holy Ghost or grieve Him, what a different aspect society would speedily assume if every part of our life were dictated by the Holy Ghost, if men took counsel of the spiritual and not of the actual, went back to Divine considerations and not to social consequences and standards, if our outward life were a literal and faithful transcript of the work within us that is done by the Holy Ghost! And yet that is what we ought to aim at. Nothing short of that ought to satisfy us. Our life ought not to be a series of jugglings, ought not to be a continuation of clever strokes by which we are trying to get from day to day as quickly, and as conveniently, and as comfortably as we can. Our life ought to be a protest, a witness, a judgment, a hope, a warning in one direction, an encouragement in another—a revelation of Divine light, an exposition of Divine truth. To this great vocation are we called. Who is sufficient for these things? If we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, we must have more of that Spirit in our hearts. If we are to be faithful to what little we do know and do feel, we must pray for a yet fuller baptism of the Holy Ghost, that we may grow holy.

Merciful God, to whom our ignorance is a prayer, and to whom our want is a piercing cry, do Thou come to us and abide with us. Not a brief glance we want, but a constant vision—not a transient glimpse

of Thy light, but a continual day. We know this, yet we do not do this. Our very first act after this hour of worship will likely be a blunder and an offence to Thee, Thou brooding Spirit of love; and those lips that have been praying and uttering words of heavenly wisdom will very likely be blanched by some noisome evil word, some censorious speech, by a sneer at weakness, or by inconstancy in righteous testimony. Oh, this is our life! We never knew what pain was till we knew Christ; we never knew what heart-sorrow was till we found our way gropingly and weepingly into Gethsemane; we never felt the unrighteousness of sin, and the abominable nature of iniquity, until we knew somewhat of the purity and heavenliness of Christ's life. When I say, "May we grow in grace," your hearts, I doubt not, will answer, "Amen and Amen."

Almighty God, Thou hast made us capable of worshipping Thee, and we desire now to bless Thee for the joy which comes of communion with Thyself and with Thy Son Jesus Christ. Thou hast caused us to know that our humblest worship is our highest elevation. When our hearts are broken with sincere contrition for sin, Thou dost enrich us with pledges of a glorious immortality, and out of the pangs of penitence dost Thou bring many proofs of an assured and blessed sonship. Whilst we wait upon the Lord our strength is renewed. Thou givest more grace; Thou givest power to the faint, and to those who have no might Thou dost increase strength, so that when natural energy fails, and young love perishes by reason of the difficulty of the way, those whose souls wait upon God are renewed in power, and are stimulated by fuller inspiration. We desire to bless Thee for the hour of prayer, and for the place of quiet Christian meditation; and we now humbly pray Thee to pour out upon us the Holy Spirit, that our worship may be intelligent, profound, spiritual; that we may receive from the Lord's hand the blessings which we peculiarly require. It is our joy to believe that Thou canst meet us all. As Thou dost pour the light of the morning upon the hill-top and upon the lowly vale, upon the great trees of the forest and the tiniest flowers that tremble at their roots, so Thou canst bless every man amongst us, and every soul can have its hunger appeased by the richness of the provisions of the Lord's house.

The City Temple.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 21st, 187[illegible].

ON HAVING JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

"Joy in the Holy Ghost."—Romans xiv. 17.

The drift of the remarks that it is now proposed to make we may gather from the following passages:—"The fruit of the Spirit is joy;" "Having received the Word with joy of the Holy Ghost;" "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human heart is not an incidental, but a necessary and unchanging, pledge of the highest joy. Christianity is more than a discipline. The Gospel fills the heart with calmness, with joy, with rapture. It carries human life to the highest point of ecstasy that is attainable under present conditions, and it proves its divinity by the diffusion and sure maintenance of the most intelligent and intense joy. Long after all history, logic, philosophy, and lofty contention of one great principle against another, or of one great principle in modification of another, have done their work, there comes into the human heart a holy gladness, which satisfies alike the moral instincts and the emotional capacity of our new-born nature.

I propose to dwell upon this Christian joy awhile; to think of it as a doctrine, a test, and a hope, praying that the Holy Ghost may speak comfortably unto us and fill us with gladness whilst we dwell upon this phase of his wondrous and beneficent ministry.

I. In the first place, therefore, let us dwell upon Christian joy in the Holy Ghost as a doctrine.

When it is said that true spirituality on the part of man is attested by heartfelt joy, it must be understood that this joy is not a transient and inexplicable feeling, a flutter without a law, a sensation that is independent of conscience and unrelated to reason. This Christian joy is the last point in a series of points. It is the point immediately beyond language, and yet strictly in the line of it. It is the rhythmic point at which reason becomes harmony, and speech thrills into music—that

indescribable but well-known point at which we can no longer conduct processes of logic, but we enter into a serenity, profound, imperturbable, and infinite in duration as the peace of God. Now this divine joy, unlike merely animal excitement, is capable of analysis. We can get at the elements which constitute this joy. This is a joy which we can explain, vindicate, rely upon. It is a development. It grows upon us. We get up to it through a series of steps. It is as the colour, the bloom, the fragrance, enclosed in the seed of divine truth educed and liberated by divine processes. Is it a cruel thing to analyse one's joy? Many joys, alas! will not bear analysis. They are but unaccountable and transient vibrations. They have nothing in them that touches the soul, that betters our nature, that increases the fineness or the quality of our manhood. We call them joys, but that is a misapplied term. It is a kind of happiness, a kind of pleasurable accident. The joy which has in it reason, truth, argument, consistency, music—it is not such joy as that. I propose, therefore, that we ask what are the constituent elements of this Christian joy?—how comes it to be joy? Explain how it is that truth becomes tuneful, and that theology and argument and philosophy and logic conspire in one rousing, soothing melody.

Beginning at the beginning, in our analysis of this Christian joy, we find under all, and penetrating all, the great, blessed doctrine of pardon. We begin with the forgiveness of sins. Until we know the mystery of the Divine remission of human guilt, we are not in a position to understand or to feel the Christian joy of which we are now speaking. Man cannot begin his highest Christian studies until he has known somewhat of the agony, it may be, through which a man passes before he knows the blessedness of a forgiven state. Pardon, therefore, is the first element in this joy; and unless we have been pardoned we shall be talking about a feeling into which our hearts cannot enter.

Nor shall we know the joy of pardon until we have known the bitterness of sin. You see how deeply we begin. To find the cause of our joy, and the explanation of our joy, we go down to the very bitterest hours of our life, and we lay bare the causes, influences, and elements which have made us so wretched. Have we felt the bitterness of sin as sin? I do not ask whether we have smarted under any of the individual or social consequences of sin. That is nothing. Our external wounds and bruises are nothing in this great argument. Have we felt the moral evil of sin, the abominableness of iniquity, as looked at in the light of the Divine righteousness? Have we felt that sin is infinitely hateful as such, even were there no coming judgment, no threatening hell, no smiling welcoming heaven? We must get at the idea of sin apart from all these things. Sin is not dreadful because somewhere there is supposed to be a hell; heaven is not lovely because somewhere, discovered by the poets, there is a shining place called "heaven." Sin is infinitely hateful if we had but an hour to live, and if our next gasp terminated our existence for ever. When a man gets a notion of sin, and passes on from that to know what Christ has done in relation to sin, and appropriates the great blessing of the Cross, and hears in his heart the sweet, tender, tremulous voice, saying, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven Thee," he gets into the first element of that joy which is ultimately to be "unspeakable and full of glory."

Nor do we rest at this gift of forgiveness. It is not difficult to conceive a man forgiven and left as it were in that state without increase of his moral vitality, without a quickening of his higher faculties, without any desire to know the further mysteries of God—simply forgiven and dismissed—to have, as it were, the hand of God put out to him formally, in recognition of the fact that a great act of remission has transpired, and there for the fellowship with the Divine Nature to cease. It is not so in the Christian argument. After pardon there comes a second element, which increases this Christian joy of which we are speaking; and that second element is described in Holy Scripture as adoption into the family of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "When the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "To as many as received Him gave He power to become the sons of God." So we are not left incoherent rebels, pardoned and dismissed from the Divine presence. We are gathered into a family, constituted into a household, and we who once knew only the name of rebel have come to know somewhat of the mystery and somewhat of the music of sonship. A pardoned rebel is one thing; a member of the family and household of God is another. A pardoned rebel might go all the days of his life hanging his head in bitter self-scourging humiliation, never able to lift his eyes to the light, under the pressure of what he once was, even though now he carries the divinely-signed charter of forgiveness. But when he becomes a son—when what he lost is more than recovered—when his human nature, once defiled, has become a nature penetrated by divine elements, and sanctified by divine presences—when he knows what is meant by sonship, it is impossible for that man to hold his tongue, to refrain from exclamation, from "making a joyful noise unto the Rock of his salvation." He does not sing as of duty; he does not get himself up to the point of singing; he does not say, "Now it is incumbent upon me to show some signs of joy." He cannot help it. The joy is natural to him now; the music belongs to him as part of him; and he no more thinks of getting up an artificial display of joy than the roses take conference together whether they shall to-morrow morning lade the breezes with their delicious perfume. And the joy is coming to a still higher point. Not only is there sonship, but there is a distinct recognition of the fact in the man's own heart of hearts. He knows that he is a son. There may be—there *are* persons who go all the days of their lives wondering whether after all they are the children of God, and forbid that I should speak a chilling or sharp word to such that might in any way discourage them. At the same time, I am now dwelling upon great breadths of truth, and therefore I repeat that where there is Divine sonship there is a sure consciousness and an abiding witness of that fact in the man's own nature. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God." If any man believe, he hath the witness in himself. He has not to go to outward charters—even to churches, or preachers, or pastors, or teachers to know whether he is right or not; there is in his heart the echo of the Divine voice, he responds to the Divine influence and he

knows of a surety by the indwelling and by the gracious dominion of the Holy Ghost over the whole outgoing of his nature that he is a child of God. I say, therefore, we can analyse our Christian joy. I repeat, it is not a vibration of our animal nature of which we can give little or no account; it can be specified in terms, it can be argued out in propositions; we can whip the sceptic along the whole line of the argument until he himself is compelled to be dumb; until he can no longer sneer nor blaspheme. The man that is pardoned—the rebel that has become a son—the soul that was a mystery to itself, hearing conflicting, thundering voices which it never could reconcile, having those voices schooled into order, and heightened into music—surely must know the meaning of indwelling joy. That is altogether independent of everything that is external. The joy not having come from the outside is not dependent upon the outside— not being a growth of the dust, does not depend upon the rains of heaven or upon the light or the sun. Being internal, subjective, spiritual, belonging to the innermost heart of hearts, it abides amid collapsing external states, amidst the ruins of many outward gladnesses. It is there singing in the valley of the shadow of death, as happy on earth as it can be in heaven, according to the capacity of our nature. I hold, therefore, that this Christian joy is not to be talked about as an impulse, as a mere sensation. It is to be looked at in the light of the Christian doctrines which underlie, penetrate, and explain it. If there be any truth at all in this representation of the case, I am not straining a single point in the whole argument in setting up the presence of this Christian joy as a test to our Christian standing before God. I should like to speak carefully upon this, with due regard to all kinds of human experience, because no one man's heart contains the whole human heart; no one little life can hold the whole compass of humanity. And we are apt, seeing things in all the narrowness and intensity of our own experience, to conclude that that experience must be the standard and rule of all. And especially in speaking about what is generally understood as a state of feeling, it is necessary that the teacher should be careful, critical, exact in his expression, lest he should unheedingly break a bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. The great truth, therefore, which is before us now, is this, apart from modification and individual exception and definition, that Christian joy is really a test of the reality of our Christian life. This Christian joy is not a question of temperament. We say it is easier for some men to be happy than it is for others, and that statement is perfectly true. Some men seem to have no difficulty at all in being happy: there is but a step between them and ecstasy; they live, as it were, on the very borders of rapture and joy of the highest kind. And it is very hard for some other people to be anything like happy at all, even under the most favourable circumstances. Whether they are clogged by an excess of animalism, whether there is something peculiarly inexplicable, difficult, and unmanageable about their temperament, I cannot say. What there may be in their nature to explain this, we do not know; but as a mere matter of fact, it is next to impossible for some people to be really radiant, bright, cheerful, glad, striking out rays of inspiring gladness around them in the family and in business. I am not, therefore, prepared to say that both these persons, when brought under the influence of

Christian thought, shall be equally demonstrative in their joyousness, or equally conscious of the intensity of gladness that belongs to Christian life.

But this Christian joy, of which I am speaking, is not a question of accident—it is not a climatic joy—it does not depend at all upon the direction of the wind, upon the weight of the atmosphere, upon outward circumstances that are beyond individual control. It is not a question of accident, but a question of life—we are born again—we come into a new state of existence. We have shaken off the old crust, the old bondage, the old dominion, and have entered into newness, not of relation, but, positively, newness of life. And therefore this Christian joy is a test of the reality of our standing before God.

The question, therefore, which comes before us now is this—have we this true joy in our hearts? I do not ask, are we always in what is known as a state of happiness; because that is a state of wretchedness, if you really understood the case. I would not always be carried about on the wings of a butterfly; I do not want always to be in the blaze and glare and fierceness of noonday; I do not want it to be always summer. If a man has set himself to be always in what he calls a state of happiness, depend upon it that man does not know what happiness is—he is never happy at all. When, therefore, I speak about Christian joy, I speak about a feeling which is comprehensive and sovereign. As Christian men have we no sorrow? Yea, we "die daily." We carry about with us, as it were, the dying of the Lord Jesus. We know what was meant when it was said that "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" We are not to attach any superficial interpretation to this word "joy," and say "Then Christians are expecting to be living in a perpetual whirl and dance of excitement; they are never to know what it is to have lead in the heart, a wound in the life, and an overshadowing gloom over all the path along which they go." We do not know anything of that state of ideal, mis-called "happiness." As Christian men, we have known more sorrow in Jesus Christ than ever we knew out of Him. I took occasion in a late discourse to say that some of us never knew what sorrow was or pain, until we knew Jesus Christ. The sorrows of the world, like the joys of the world, never, in this present state of life, cut down to the very roots of life, and get through and through it. When we look at life from Christ's standard, regard it from the sensitiveness of His sympathy, we know what it is to carry a great, heavy cross that crushes us down under a weight of woe.

Then, some man will say, "Are we to understand from this description of your Christian life that you are often in a state of melancholy, and depression, and sadness?" Yes, you are to understand that exactly as you have said it. We have great shadowing melancholies; we have sorrows so great that they cannot explain themselves but in intermittent sobs; we have occasional agonies that rend us, and would destroy us but for a superior power. Well then, some man will say again, "How do you reconcile all this with Christian joy in the Holy Ghost?" "You cannot reconcile it," I reply to the interrogator, "in mere words, in so many propositions, and in so many consecutive and formal arguments. You must *live it* to reconcile it." You must *be* some arguments; you cannot state them. "I am the truth," said Christ. That is it wherein

we are but poor fragmentary creatures, because we speak the truth often instead of *being* it. So with these great conflicts and dissonances, and horrible agonies of the soul—we own them, we pass through them, and we would hardly part with them; they seem to bring with them such secret mysteries of strength that our life would be a poor shallow thing, if we were all left in softness and danced away in the sunshine.

But surely there must be some explanation of this feeling—of this contrariety and conflict of feeling. So there is, and, so far as it can be told in language, this is it. Christian joy includes and rules the whole sphere of human experiences. All other feelings do but touch us, glance off us, flutter a moment before us, and then perish. But this spiritual, dominant, fundamental emotion sways, includes, reigns over the entire of our emotions, impulses, feelings, hopes, aspirations, prayers. It is, so to speak, our vital breath, our native air. You surely know what it is to have life enough in the heart to be enabled to care but little for some wound on the skin. The central life is great enough to overcome that little bruise. It is not vital; it is but cutaneous. It can be moved off by the billows of life that are heaving out of your strong noble heart. That will but dimly explain what I mean, because there is a connexion between any wound that can be made upon the human frame and the heart that gives that frame its animal sustentation. But the little sorrows of this present life seem to have no relation at all to the all-ruling, all-determining joy that makes up the very centre and being of our best life; and as for these greater melancholies of which I have been speaking, brothers, 'tis the light that makes the shadow! That shadow—what is it? Take hold of it, analyze it. Tell us what it is. You make, after all, but a shadow of it. A great light shows the shadow from themountain. 'Tis our great joys that make our great sorrows. Then I do not insist that any man should live in a state of constant rapture—expect that he should live at the full stretch of his being, and be constantly putting out the entire resources of his strength. That is not what is meant by having "joy in the Holy Ghost," spiritual gladness, spiritual comfort. Our joy is often peace, a peace that is unfathomable and unspeakable. Sometimes the great calm sea of our peace rises into rapture, the great billows of our love break into the spray of speech. The question for us to decide in talking about Christian joy as a test of Christian life, is this: is there something in our nature that we can go back to and be content with, and more than content with, when every door is shut in our faces, and when the fig-tree fails to bring forth its fruit, and there is no herd in the stall, and nothing to be gleaned in the wheat-field? Can we then say, "Though this be the case, I will joy—joy in the God of my salvation?" But if we are dependent upon the olive-yard and the fig-tree and the wheat-field for our joy, then is it but an atmospheric gladness which may perish before the setting of the sun. The Christian man feels, when all these outward things decline and utterly fade away, his life of lives is not touched, and it is in that inner inaccessible life that he feels the intense and unutterable joy of a true standing through the blessed Christ before the blessed God.

But I have a word for you who may be hearing me from the outside. I have a message for you—a message from God. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. "WICKEDNESS NEVER BRINGS JOY!" There!

That's my gospel to you. You dance, scream, whirl; you are giddy, frivolous, self-oblivious, mad; you know not the calm, the peace, the rapture of intelligent joy. 'Tis a beastly excitement! It is an animal sensibility! It is the animal that is in you gone mad, or the devil gone drunk! It is not the joy that comes of reason; it is not the music that can be explained in logic. You had better believe this, my young friend, before you go any farther. Sometimes a man speaks for all the generations that are gone: I speak in that capacity now. It is not this individual tongue you hear. When you hear me, you hear the dead of all ages. Every angel and prince of God that has gone away from this scene of discipline and trial, and every soul that has withered into devilhood—all the generations of human life conspire in my individual testimony, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Is that a severe word? No. Severity is a relative term. It will be found to be a gracious word, if any poor young life should be startled by it, should turn round, and should inquire with all his heart, "What must I do to be saved?" And if any poor, trembling, anxious human life is now putting that question to me silently, again I speak for all generations, again I am the spokesman of the universal family, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

THE PRAYER.

Our Father which art in heaven, we bless Thee that Thou hast revealed Thyself unto us as the blessed God. Thou art blessed for evermore. Thou art full of joy and love. We would be made happy in Thy happiness; we would be blessed with thy benediction; we would rest in Thy infinite peace. Forbid that we should seek for any joy less than the joy of Thine own heart. May we never hew unto ourselves cisterns; may we evermore drink of the river of God, which is full of water. May we obtain joy and gladness, and know what it is for sorrow and sighing to flee away. We rejoice that Thou hast made us capable of understanding somewhat of Thy nature, and of reproducing it in our own life; that wherein we are partakers of the Divine nature we are born not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, even by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Thou hast renewed us, and not we ourselves, according to Thine infinite mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Thou hast brought us to know what is meant by the fear and the love of God. We bless Thee that to-day we meet in the spirit of Christian joy. We are happy in Thy love, being redeemed by Thy grace, and sustained by all Thine own comfort. We know what it is to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the

dead." And it is our joy to believe that even yet we know but little of the gladness which Thou hast in reserve for us. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." "Our light affliction," then, "is but for a moment, working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Command Thy blessing to rest upon us. As Thou pourest the rains upon the thirsty earth and revivest the tender herb with the dews of the morning, so do Thou refresh us, Thine inheritance, and baptize us with all needed grace. The Lord receive our confessions of sins, our penitential supplications, seeing that we gather round the Saviour's Cross and utter no name but the name of Jesus Christ, whom Thou hearest always. For His sake do Thou pardon our sin. Fill us with the joy of the Holy Ghost, and give us that good hope through grace, which strengthens the heart for every conflict, and sanctifies its long endurance. And unto the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, whom we know and adore as one God, be the kingdom and the power and the glory, world without end. Amen.

SPECIAL NOTE.

The THURSDAY SERVICE *will, D.V., be resumed at Twelve o'clock, on September 22nd, 1870. The Service will be conducted as heretofore, and will never exceed one hour in duration.*

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The City Temple.

Sermons

PREACHED IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, LONDON,

1871.

BY

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.

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The City Temple.

INTRODUCTORY.

SO far as we have been able to ascertain, this is the only Penny Weekly Homiletic Magazine in the world. We are heartily glad, therefore, to be spared the pain of entering into competition with good men. We find an unoccupied field, and our best endeavours will be made to cultivate it successfully. Our first attention will be given to the pulpit department; in which our readers will find extemporaneous sermons, carefully prepared outlines, and portions of a homiletic analysis of the New Testament. By and by we hope to give papers on subjects of general interest, so as to make ourselves welcome in many Christian families. We are not aware that we are attempting to meet "a want long and deeply felt." As that celebrated "want" has brought to grief so many self-sacrificing devotees, we prefer to invoke the good offices of a less ruthless patron. We simply make an experiment. Is there *room* for a Penny Weekly Homiletic Magazine? In the belief that there is such room we go to work, zealously and hopefully. The only pledge we make is that we will do our best. Sometimes *The City Temple* may contain only a sermon: sometimes it may have few pages, and sometimes a good many. Much will depend upon temperature. We shall unfold to the sunshine; we shall shrivel under the east wind. Already we see the typical reader who runs the pages through his fingers and thumbs, and says there are not many of them. His standard is *many*, not *much*. Let that servant and worshipper of the idol Big remember how little he himself was when he began the world, and now look at his overwhelming immensity of five feet eight and teens of stones: out of this recollection there may come some mercy for infant enterprises.

We have a large number of literary helpers ; at present, however, they are but imaginary. One of them is, if anything, too solid ; another is nothing if not critical ; a third is a man of one idea, which he can never express ; a fourth is every now and then advertised for as a theological vagrant, but he always turns up right in the main ; a fifth is so prosaical that we always communicate with him through the medium of a third party ; others are average men, who can easily give you a match, though they can never show you the sun. These are our "staff,"—an influential and most reliable dream.

Reviews of books will not be neglected, but it must be distinctly understood by authors and publishers that we cannot undertake to notice all the books that may be sent to us. Probably the most of them will remain without attention. *On this understanding alone can we consent to receive books.*

We begin our work with good heart. In *preaching* we hope to be evangelical, enlightened, and stimulating : in *criticism* we trust to be impartial, rigorous, and discriminating : and in *controversy* we shall try to remember that charity itself is argument and forbearance is power.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, December 22, 1870.

(THE FIFTY-NINTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE THREEFOLD BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."—MARK I., 1—8.

THE gospel may be said to have three beginnings, and yet it is perfectly correct to say that each beginning has a speciality and completeness of its own. The beginning of the gospel is, of course, to be found in the thought and love of God. We may cast our lines back as far as we can through the ages of eternity, and we shall never be able to find the point at which God's concern for the welfare of the universe that was to be first began, and yet the Lamb of God is said to have been slain from before the foundation of the world. The sacrifice of Christ was not an afterthought on the part of the Divine Being; it was, so to speak, part of Himself, an element of His very Godhead and of His very existence. So that, if we are really to go back to what may be termed the beginning of beginnings, we shall have to search the depths of the divine existence, and follow all the wonderful and infinite course of the divine thinking and purpose and love. There, of course, we are lost. Our hearts can only point, as it were, towards that great solemn mystery. Explanation we have none. Special indication is entirely beyond our power. We are lost in wonder, and our wonder is lost in speechlessness.

But there was what may be termed a second beginning of the gospel, and it is to that event that the gospel before us relates. The second beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is found

in the incarnation of God's Son. We begin the next time at Bethlehem. We were lost when it was a mere question of unuttered and in speech unutterable love. We only begin to think and to feel and to understand in part God's meaning, when He utters His love not in speech, but in the person, the flesh and blood of God's dear Son. We can begin there—little children can begin at that point; our love can commence its study at the cradle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Creatures like ourselves need alphabets, beginnings, sharp lines, visibilities. We are not all pure mind; we cannot dwell upon the abstract, the unconditioned, the absolute, the infinite, in matters of this kind. We need some one to look at, to speak to, to go up to quite closely, and to hear speak the language of the love of God. This is what may be termed the second beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus Christ himself went away. That beginning was, so to speak, taken from us. Where then are we to look for the third beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? We look for it in the Church. As He was, so are we to be in the world. We are to be "living epistles, known and read of all men." When men ask, "Where is Christ?" we are to show them Christianity. And when they ask, "What is Christianity?" we are to show them the Church. Meanwhile, indeed, an incomplete representation of the truth, yet Jesus Christ himself claims it, and devolves upon the Church the responsibility not only of bearing his name by exemplifying his life, but of interpreting his doctrine and living upon his love. So, then, we don't treat the Church as a mere accident; we do not regard even the visible Church as something that is of the nature of an ordinary human association. It is more than a society; it is more than a club; more than a confraternity based upon kindred social sympathies. It is the embodied doctrine and love of Christ; and in so far as it falls short of that embodiment, it has yet to be crucified, purged with fire, and searched by the light of God. And is it not the same with all great sublime far-reaching life? Yonder is a man sitting alone with closed eyes, yet the vision of his soul is fastened upon a wondrous picture. He is looking at a great poem built in stone, at a piece of wondrous thinking, having great foundations, far-ascending and glittering pinnacles or majestic domes. It is all in his mind. At present it is nothing but a thought. He is an architect. He has a cathedral in his brain, and he sees it, every line—sees the great gaping places dug out for the foundations, sees the courses of great rough unpolished stone—sees the building rising into shape, into presence, into meaning, into awfulness—petrified poesy. But that is not enough for him. Now he draws his plan. He gives the thought visibility; he interprets it to duller brains; he calls in what may be termed, without offence, a secondary order of intellect—not the dreaming and poetic intellect, that creates new heavens and new earths and lives in continued newness of beauty. He calls in the power that can give expression and visibleness to great ideas, and he is not content until he sees this thought of his built up in all its grandeur and completeness; and even then, if he be a true artist, if the divine fire of art be really in him, he wants something more. He does not content himself with looking at the great stone-work; he wants to see the purpose

for which that stone-work was put up carried out, in so far as he himself is a complete man and works upon complete ideas. There is to be an inner cathedral, a human cathedral, a cathedral of praises, a cathedral of living worshippers. Probably he does not in all cases reach that third idea, but that third idea ought to be consequential upon the other two ; and *is*, in the up-building of the great cathedral which God himself is to inhabit—first, his own great speechless, silent, infinite, universe-encompassing love, and then his visible Son, and then his redeemed Church, and then the Cathedral of Praise which the Holy One of Israel is to inhabit throughout eternity.

As it is written in the prophets, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." The Divine dispensations have all been progressive. You cannot point me to a single backward step in the Divine thinking, in the Divine movement. This Book, the book of inspiration, the Book of God, goes right forward. There is progress, but not progress by correction—progress by developement, by natural expansion—the tree coming out of the seed, and the seed only lost when the tree has reached the fulness of the divine intent. Now this a legitimate test of all truth, a legitimate test of every ministry and a legitimate test of every Christian life. The question which may be fairly put about the Bible and about all life, all ministries and all churches, is this, "What of their progressiveness?" If a man is the same to-day that he was twenty years ago, he is growing downwards, and is really not the same man that he was twenty years ago. A man must be double the man he was twenty years ago or there is somthing wrong in him. If you say he preaches exactly as he did a quarter of a century since, then he was a poor preacher to begin with and he has become worse and worse as the years have rolled away. Now I fasten this enquiry upon the book of God, and I will stake great results upon it. What of its progressiveness? How did divine revelation begin? How has it proceeded? How did it culminate? Is the culmination of the divine truth of the same nature and quality as the beginning, or is there disjunction, is there vital separation? And everything will depend upon the answer that can be returned to these enquries. Now we claim on a Christian basis and for Christian purposes, that all the dispensations have been progressive and culminative and climacteric, and the last point of the series is of the same quality as the first. This is a great mystery but it is an unanswerable argument. Here you have the prophets living their tumultuous, exciting, bewildering life—great men to-day by reason of special divine visitation, by reason of having been called away suddenly by the Spirit of God, shown wondrous sights, and having their ears opened to wondrous sounds—and to-morrow, weak as common men, if not weaker, by reason of the terrible reaction—thrown down, shattered, unable to make anything of the world or of their strange life. God then in the first instance, has his prophets in the world—men that lived less in the present than in the future, men therefore, who were continually being subjected to tests of a capricious and arbitrary kind, but never responding to such demands—men who by reason of living in the future were subject to continual misjudgment and mis-

apprehension. Oh! but their's was a sad life at times. To have little or no connection with the men that are round about you, to have a heart that cannot understand or thinks it unworthy of understanding the little things that go to make up the present dying hour; to be in existence to-day, and yet to be breathing the atmosphere of centuries to come. That was a test of life that was almost a divine judgment upon those strange men the prophets.

Then after the prophets we have a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare." We have John the Baptist, and of John the Baptist it is said that he was sent before the face of the Redeemer,—"Behold I send my messenger before thy face." He was next to the face, the presence of the coming one. The prophets were centuries away from him, but this man was all but a transparent veil; they could almost see the coming God through him. He went immediately before the face. If he stood aside but for a moment there was the one that was to come. And oh, what a burden he carried who had the breath of the predicted one breathed upon him as he was going through his introductory ministry. Now the question is how to get from Malachi to Matthew? Almighty God has so trained the world by prophecy, by type, by figure, by ritualism, by manifold discipline, that he has made the world very impatient for the next step. How to get from the Old Testament into the New?—that is the great question—how to get from the one dispensation in its final phase, into another dispensation that shall satisfy an impatient, necessitous world. Where is your human genius there? Shut up this New Testament and deal with the Old Testament alone, and I say, now how are you to write a testament that shall be New and yet of the nature of the Old, that shall answer all the questions suggested by the Old and satisfy the impatience which has been wrought in the hungry heart of man by the manifold system of training which the divine being has adopted? Unfortunately for this point of the enquiry, we know how the New Testament opens, and our familiarity with it becomes our weakness. Forget if you can for one moment how the New Testament opens. Read from Genesis to Malachi and then ask yourselves this question: Now what can be done that shall not throw us back, that shall make the best possible use of the elements we have gathered, that shall move not on a side, not upon a tangential line, but that shall move upon some straight line and carry it forward to a natural and satisfactory climax. Will men put their genius to the torment that will impose upon them—how to write a testament, when for so many centuries we have got an old one. We have got almost tired of writing now. Almighty God hath wrought us up almost into an angry mood. We are now jealous, impatient, strained to the highest tension, and if we step one point backwards, it is to us atheism, defiance, and hell if need be. What will He do? We have had prophecy, we have had great temples, we saw the procession of the priests, we have watched the sacrifices, always beginning never ending, or ending only to begin again; but we are tired of that now, and we in this excited, strained, impatient, anxious, wondering temper say, "How will God go on next?" Oh, I dare hardly turn the page over; it seems that in the turning of this page our destiny is being turned, is being settled for good

or evil. What can come after prophets and minstrels and priests and mighty but insufficient interpreters of the divine purpose? Now I turn the page and I find this solution—"Immanuel, God with us," and the artist that is in me, the idealist that is in me, as well as the sinner that is in me, says, "It is enough!" My Lord and my God! Yes, we could not have written in mere words a New Testament. The world could not have borne that; but when the New Testament was written in the flesh and blood of God himself, and the man that spoke to us was Immanuel, a man that could stoop like a mother and look like a God, It is enough!

And John said, "I indeed have baptised you with water, but He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost." The crowning dispensation must be spiritual. "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost." There cometh a time in all study when we want to get clear of mere formulæ and mere lines and laborious and intricate processes, and we want to have that mental dominance which brings us into constant recognition and appreciation of the truth. We get tired of looking, we get tired of using powers that were intended to be merely temporary. The Divine Being comes to us, and turns our religion from a process of looking and enquiry and hard service into spiritual life, spiritual love, until we know what it is to have the power of instantly going to God and of holding, as it were, face-to-face communion and fellowship with him. That is, if we be baptised with the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost takes hold of the highest faculties of our nature and works with those alone. The body falls off. All that was instrumental and of the nature of agency fades and drops away, and we come into mind-power, moral power, spiritual mastery; and things which aforetime were difficult and almost impossible to us, become easy and natural, and communion with God becomes the very breath of our souls.

What, then, of the subject as it has thus been hinted at? If we have in any degree laid hold of its meaning, it is evident that the subject addresses a word in the first place to students. Here is a revelation to be studied, my brethren, and we shall only be wise masters in this art in proportion as we have a grasp of the whole. Our theology must not be angular but circular: it must not be beautiful in one or two places, it must be complete. We must understand the dispensations each in itself and each in its relation to the succeeding order of things; otherwise we shall be thrown about by everybody who chooses to play legerdemain with us. We shall have questions put to us that we cannot answer, and difficulties which we might otherwise count as trifles will be mountainous and insuperable. We must get into that state of mind that sees the beginning and that sees the end, and grasps the extremes, so far as it is possible for limited life so to grasp them. There are many men who are very clever in certain points, but take them out of those points and they are shorn Samsons—any child can trifle with them. No, we must, if we are to be successful and useful students and ministers of these holy mysteries, have something like a grasp of the whole; and though we may not be able to answer special difficulties and peculiar enquiries, yet, as in the spiritual life so in the intellectual

regions, we shall bring the power of the endless to bear upon the difficulties that are momentary. I confess, after having done my best to study this Book, that I am most impressed by its unity, its completeness, by the inter-relation of part to part, so that if I touch one point I break up its completeness, I impair and injure its wondrous beauty. There are points where I am dumb—mysteries that I cannot shed any light upon, and from which I cannot extract one explanatory word—but when I look at the whole, the complete dispensations of God, I find their very completeness one of the most convincing and determining arguments.

Here is a lesson to Churches. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" It was reserved for you specially to be baptised by the Holy Spirit. Are you still lingering among the prophets? You are not in Christ if so be ye have not received the Holy Ghost. Do you tell me you are busy gathering what you may from the lightning-scared slopes of Sinai? I say Sinai! A fragment of the past! It is now what of Calvary and what of Olivet and what of the Church, the temple into which the Holy Ghost came as baptising fire? No man is at liberty to live backwards. If the prophets underwent misjudgment and torment by reason of having to live in the future, what shall be said of those poor ricketty creatures who are always trying to go back into the dim past, to exhume the prophets, and to live three or four centuries behind their privileges? The whole judgment now is a judgment of the Holy Ghost, not what questions can we answer, not what histories have we considered and mastered, but what about the inward baptism, the baptism of fire, the baptism of life, the gift of the spirit of interpretation and the spirit of purity. These are the searching questions which become to us terrible as the judgment of Almighty God.

Here is a lesson to pioneers. John was a herald and John knew the position to which he was called, and he never trepassed the limits of his vocation. When he spoke he did not speak in his own name, he did not draw attention to himself, he always spoke of the one mightier than he, who was immediately coming. And what are we brethren, whether we be ministers or teachers or parents or churches, what are we really so far as our service goes but pioneers, those who shall prepare for and point out the one mightier than ourselves? If for a moment John had supposed himself to be the Messiah, what a shock and what terrible results would have followed! Men must know their power, men must know their calling, and when a man knows his limitations it is surprising how mighty a weak man is. Keep him within his own province, bind him to his own mission, and within his proper boundaries, he is a prince and a son of God; but let him get beyond that line and he is captured as an intruder or is slain as a spy. Let us know what is meant by our position as pioneers. If the frame-maker should ever take it into his head that he is the artist, what an anti-climax would be perpetrated! If April should ever take it into its head that it can do the work of August, what a block there would be in the process of the year.

We are called to different positions in the Church. God hath set some in the Church pastors, prophets, evangelists, teachers, helps,

governors, every one as it pleaseth him. What then! We are not to devour one another, we are not to envy one another, we are not to say hard, cruel, unkind, depreciatory words about one another; a man must find out what God intended him to be in the course of his dispensation, and if he be that, however humble the position, he will have resting upon him the ever sustaining and ever comforting blessing of God. Are you an evangelist? I glorify God in you; do not try to be anything else. Have you in you the consciousness that you can be something else, something that you think higher? First of all I do not know that it is higher—I do not know that there is anything higher in the church than being an evangelist, one that preaches the Gospel here and there and wheresoever opportunity is given him, or he himself can make opportunity for the proclamation of it. But if it has got into you that you can do something higher, be careful, make it a matter of profound religious enquiry before you step out of the position you are now in. Are you a pastor? I glorify God in you; I long for, I almost covet your powers. You have such a way of dropping your voice so that the dullest can hear you and the weakest are made glad by your presence; you can put so much truth into so few words, that one covets, with a godly covetousness, your rich and most fruitful gifts. Do not try to be anything else merely for the sake of change. If there be in you another calling, God in his own time and in his own way, will make it quite clear to you. Are you labouring in a village and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not, you had better not entertain that notion, it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to Metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. "To fill up the sphere we have" should be our duty and our joy. "It is only a nutshell." Well then it will take less filling. "It is only a little village." Well then you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to abide just where he is. Nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there, he is bound by every consideration that can stir a true man's heart and strength to make the very best of his position.

Here is a lesson to enquirers in the last place. My friends, there is nothing more to come. If I have read this Book aright, I find that it is a shut volume; it is now complete; there is nothing more to be written. Now, if you are waiting for something else, I feel it incumbent upon me, as the result of my own studies, to say in my own name that the vision is closed, and there is nothing more to come. What more can you possibly want? The prophets have been here, flaming men, men with voices like trumpets and thunder—they have been here. The minstrels, men of poesy, dreaming men, men who had eyes that could see visions in the night time—they have been here. They are gone. Priests have been here, men who shed blood and who explained the meaning of the blood which they shed, who built the altars and officiated at those altars—they have been here, and they have gone. And John the Baptist, the preliminary man, the man who went immediately before the face—he has been here and gone. And Immanuel

has been here—"God with us." And the Holy Ghost is come to us. What more can there be to wait for? If this cannot satisfy us, then what will appease our hunger? He must be a bold man that can elbow and cleave and force his way to hell through prophets and priests and psalmists and Baptists and God's Son and God the Holy Ghost, and then say, as he takes the last plunge, "There was not enough given me; I was waiting for something else, and that something else never came." Will you risk that? Have you made the best of what has been given? Are you really masters of the Book of God, able to understand its scope and its meaning? Oh, see to it, that there is not some little or great pebble of selfishness over which you are just going to topple into darkness and ruin and death. O Thou, who madest the eyes of the heart, anoint the eyes of our love, that we may see Thee, and be fascinated by Thy beauty for ever, Amen.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER I.

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God;

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

5 And there went unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

I. The Gospel has had three beginnings, yet it is right to speak of each as The beginning—

1st. The beginning as seen in the Divine counsels, when the Gospel was but a *Thought*. 2nd. The beginning as seen in the Incarcation, when the Gospel became a *Person*. 3rd. The beginning as seen in its believers, when the Gospel becomes a *New Creation*.

II. One beginning of the Gospel is always introductory to another. It is so in the highest human thinking. There is, first, the thought, then the agent or representative, then the result. From Mark's preface we learn that there was—(1) A prophecy. (2) A pioneer. (3) An introductory rite. The import-

ance of this view is shown by two considerations.

1st. *It indicates the consistency and progressiveness of Divine revelation.* The terms *Old* Testament and *New* Testament are equal to *old seed* and *new flower*. They are the same in different stages of unfoldment. God's truth is one.

2nd. *It supplies a test of the genuineness of professed revelation.* The fragment must be of the same quality as the mass. There must be continuous augmentation of light and power. The movement is from John to Jesus, never from Jesus to John. Look at the Old and New Testament, and mark the *ascending* line of thought.

III. No beginning of the gospel can be true and effectual except as it leads to a spiritual consummation. The prophets pointed to John, John pointed to Jesus, Jesus pointed to the Holy Ghost. This fact shows—

1st. The transitoriness of all mere *ceremony*.

2nd. The uselessness of all mere *knowledge*.

3rd. The possibility of the highest *fellowship* with God.

The subject addresses a lesson—

First: To Students. You have to deal with a harmonious and progressive revelation. In order to be wise master-builders, you must grasp the revelation as a *whole*. You must know it in its proportions, analogies, and tendencies; otherwise you might be sacrificing a principle to an accident, or exaggerating the ceremonial to the neglect of the spiritual.

Second: To Pioneers. A man only works well in proportion as he knows the measure of his power and the limit of his mission. When the frame-maker mistakes himself for the painter, art is degraded. It does not follow that because a man knows the alphabet he can write a book. The pioneer must never go in the king's clothes. April cannot do the work of August.

Third: To Churches. Have you received the Holy Ghost? You have admired the prophets, but have ye received the Holy Ghost? You have fought sectarian battles at the river side, but have ye received the Holy Ghost?

Fourth: To Enquirers. There is nothing more to come. You have had prophets, psalmists, lawgivers, Christ and the dispensation of the Spirit. Why wait?

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

I. John's dispensation was thus shewn to be of divine appointment. Notice the beauty of John's work in relation both to the past and to the future, it was *a baptism unto repentance: a baptism*, and so connected with the ceremonial past;—a baptism unto *repentance*, and so introductory to a new and more intensely *spiritual* state of things.

II. But why should Jesus Christ identify himself with a baptism which was unto repentance? His identification with that baptism was not for the purpose of personal confession, but for the purpose of *official absorption*: he took up the dispensation and ended it by the introduction of a better. So, when he took upon himself the nature of mankind, he did not degrade and enfeeble God, he elevated and glorified man.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 And there came a voice from heaven, *saying*, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Whatever is done in the divine name and for the divine glory is succeeded by increasing evidence of divine favour. What Jesus saw on coming out of the water, we should all see on returning from every act of homage and obedience. (1) The Spirit is a heavenly gift, not a natural grace; (2) Sonship is not generic it is *specific*,— *Thou*; (3) Sonship is not left a mystery, it is declared and confirmed to the individual heart.

12 And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

(1) Sonship does not exempt from temptation; (2) Temptation does not invalidate Sonship; (3) Temptation, rightly answered, makes Sonship a life and power. We are not to be content with nominal Sonship. We are to be *proved* men. Contrast Matthew's account of the Temptation with Mark's. The one is minute and elaborate; the other is compendious. What history may be put into a sentence! There are experiences which cannot be put into words,— they can only be hinted at. Some men have not the power of spiritual analysis; they cannot follow a temptation through its changing assaults and attitudes. Mark was probably not equal to Matthew in this particular. As with Temptation so with Conversion. Some men can only say that they are converted,— explanation and discussion are beyond their power. "And the angels ministered unto him," the darkest temptation has some light to relieve it. When we feel the devil, we should look for the angels.

14 Now after that John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

(1) The imprisonment of the servant does not hinder the progress of the Master. (2) Ill treatment of the messenger may actually help to prove the Divinity of the message: *(a)* it tests sincerity, *(b)* it tests the sustaining power of the doctrine that is preached. The 15th verse shews Jesus Christ in three aspects: (1) As the interpreter of Time; (2) As the revealer of the Divine Kingdom; (3) As a Spiritual Regenerator. Under these heads note—

Time: The preparative process— the development of opportunity— the moral import of special times.

Kingdom: Not a *transient* erection; not a *subordinate* arrangement; not a *human* ambition—the kingdom of God.

Regeneration: Vital; progressive; spiritual: Vital—*Repent*, destroy the past, humble yourselves on account of sin: Progressive, after humiliation is to come trust, the broken heart is to be the believing heart: Spiritual,—not a change of mere attitudes and relations, but a change of life.

It is to be specially noted that Jesus Christ preached the kingdom of God as a *gospel*,—rightly understood it is not a despotism, it is not a terror, it is the supremacy of light, of truth, of love.

The City Temple.

NOTES AND COUNSELS.

1. A SCOTCHMAN asked a minister for five shillings, and in return for the favour, said, "I'll give you a day's hearing some time." It is undoubtedly understood by many that in listening to a minister they are conferring a favour upon him. A person once asked me to lend him a sovereign, and in support of his request informed me that he had long attended my ministry. Possibly the man richly deserved a sovereign for having done so; at the same time it is a popular mistake to suppose that the minister is the party receiving the favour. He gives his hearers his best thinking, his best power of all kinds, and it is therefore a pity to show him thankfulness by borrowing money of him.

2. I have heard of a minister who was paid his quarterly salary by instalments. The treasurer of the church would give him a pound or two now and then, and promise him more when the pew-rents were paid. It is a popular mistake to suppose that punctuality is not needed in church payments. Punctuality on the side of the church will assist punctuality on the side of the minister. It is our happy conviction that by far the majority of ministers are punctually paid; at the same time there are exceptions enough to justify this reference.

3. It is a popular error to mistake that *length* is the only dimension of at sermon. A man said to a minister, "Your sermons are too short." Said the minister, "If you will practice all I preach you will find them quite long enough." A sentence may be a sermon. It is too true that some sermons are tediously long, yet even in some of those cases it should be remembered that there are bad hearers as well as bad preachers. The man in the front pew (of any church) who holds down his head or trifles with his prayer-book during the sermon will be a trouble to the best preacher. There should be at least one electrical hearer in every church. The preacher will soon find him out.

4. It is a common error to suppose that a church is dead because it is not making a noise. Some people would keep up a continued round

of tea meetings, bazaars, Dorcases, holiday makings, and trumpet-blowings, and advertise the same as signs of spiritual life. Some injudicious man once drew a distinction between perspiration and inspiration. He must have had his eye upon the people in question. Spiritual life is generally quiet. There may be periods of intense excitement, but they cannot last. We should remember that the river is not deepest where it is noisiest.

5. It is a popular error to suppose that a gig can go on one wheel. The minister must have the co-operation of his hearers. They must be workers together. The minister cannot beg and organise and visit and preach and preside,—get up bazaars, establish societies, collect for chapel debts, tell anecdotes at sewing meetings, and reconcile all the differences which arise between two and ninepence and half-a-crown. He is called to preach the gospel,—work enough for the strongest powers! Let him be encouraged and honoured in his holy vocation.

There is no work so glorious as interpreting the purposes of God concerning a world dead in trespasses and sins. To this work the minister is called. He has trials peculiar to his position, but the compensations entirely counterbalance them. To know that he has been the means of leading souls out of darkness into God's marvellous light, is to realise a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Before the intensity of that joy all trials are dwarfed and annihilated. And what is the worth of our ministry if it be not attested by souls that have felt its power? Mere cleverness, skill in textualism, power of speech, is less than nothing: the sign that is most undoubted and most to be coveted, is the sign of souls owning Jesus Christ as Saviour and King. Let us, as the new year advances, show more and more clearly that as ministers we are determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Then shall the year be bright with a light above the brightness of the sun. We shall have reminders enough that we are still on earth, yet even in the coldest wind we shall detect some odour of Heaven.

The same admonition may be addressed to the churches. Our safety is nearness to the Cross. As we stray from that, we stray into darkness and into unholy life. Brethren, the throne of grace should be our refuge,—the secret place of the Most High our daily habitation. To be holiest is to be happiest. To know Christ's heart is to delight in Christ's service. Dear Saviour, wounded for us, and for us now pleading in the Heaven made the sweeter to Thee by Thy recollections of earth, fill us all with Thine own spirit! To know Thee is to know all things. To serve Thee is to turn our whole life into music. To suffer for Thee is to bear wounds for the King's sake, and through sanctified tears to see far into the better world. In Thy strength, then, we move forward to do and bear all Thy holy and gentle will.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, January 5, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-FIRST NOONDAY SERVICE.)

WHOSE IS THE BATTLE?

"The battle is not yours, but God's."—2 CHRONICLES XX., 15.

JEHOSHAPHAT, the fourth king of Judah, was a man of high religious character, of much zeal in the right way, and of true and noble instinct in all political and religious controversy. Yet there was in his character a remarkably weak side; this man, like many others, had a vulnerable heel. There was in him what is exceedingly interesting and precious in personal character and social intercourse, but what is not always in such good place in a king and public man—a strong vein of amiability. Amiability may lead to many and grievous faults. Under certain circumstances the King of Judah was too easily persuaded. When he fell into the hands of the impious and crafty Ahab, who occupied the rival throne of Israel, he too readily succumbed to his seductive power. Jehoshaphat fell a good deal into the hands of Ahab, and it was probably not unnatural, when it is considered that Jehoshaphat's eldest son married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. So the tenderest bonds of society may harden into the chains of the worst slavery. Having been schooled by Ahab, Jehoshaphat joined his successor Ahaziah, who also did, according to the history, very wickedly. Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah went into a ship-building partnership, which ended disastrously, the ships being all broken and never able to reach Tarshish. Jehoshaphat then joined Joram, the next king of Israel, in an expedition against Moab, and then there opens a most tragic and exciting history. We cannot go into that history now, suffice to say that this war exasperated the Moabites, and impelled them to retaliate upon a great scale. Their kinsmen, the Ammonites, the Syrians, and the Edomites combined in one tremendous offensive alliance, and entering Judah openly defied Jehoshaphat its king.

It is in connection with this war that we find our text. All this hostility of the Moabites developed to the full the deeply religious nature of Jehoshaphat. He feared, and set himself, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. The towns of Judah hastened to Jerusalem ; the whole nation became as the heart of one man. When the concourse assembled, under circumstances so touching, so terrible, Jehoshaphat the king stood in the midst of his people in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and offered the following sublime appeal to Heaven :—"Oh, Lord God of our Fathers, art not Thou God in Heaven? and rulest Thou not over all the kingdoms of the heathen, and in Thy hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, Thy friend for ever. And they dwelt therein, and they built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name saying: if when evil cometh upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house in Thy presence (for Thy name is in this house), and cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help. And now behold the children of Ammon and Moab, and Mount Seir, whom Thou wouldst not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them not. Behold, I say how they reward us to come and cast us out of Thy possession which Thou didst give us to inherit. Our God, wilt not Thou judge them, for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us? neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are upon Thee." A king's prayer for his people in the time of national disaster. There was one spokesman, but he pleaded for the whole nation. All Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children. It was a nation in extremity ; yet in the crisis of its peril, it showed the sublimity of child-like trust in the merciful and almighty God of Heaven. After Jehoshaphat had concluded his prayer, a strange scene occurred. There fell upon one man in the company of Jehosaphat the Spirit of the Lord, and instantly, with a voice like the trump of God, he said, "Be not afraid, nor dismayed, by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle ; set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." There can be no doubt that this shows to men, in the most graphic and impressive form, the value of the religious element in national affairs. We have a common saying amongst us, much lauded, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." I am not prepared to say that that saying is entirely without foundation in common sense ; I believe that it comprehends a large amount of prudence. I have no doubt that as used by certain men, it is a very sensible thing to say. At the same time, it is not in the mouth of every man so admirable an injunction after all. It will not bear (as used by the men now specially refered to) examination in the light of an incident like this. If we trusted God more we should give him greater scope for intervention. We have taken everything upon ourselves. We have mounted a gun wherever we could ; we have worked with the desperation of Atheists. Many a time, indeed, we have asked God to bless our arms ; but when did we ask him to bless our

simple, child-like, holy trust? It is perfectly possible for a saying like the popular expression, which has just been quoted to be used as the expression of a sneer. It is very possible for the expression also to cover a latent Atheism. I am not so fanatical as to deny the use of means. Nor will I expose myself to the charge of seeking peace at any price, and succumbing to overwhelming circumstances. But I do wish to preach this, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, that if we gave God more scope, he might more obviously interpose in our national affairs. Of one place it was said, He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

If we take our own affairs upon our own shoulders, work like Atheists, and if only when we are in extremity, begin to pray, we cannot wonder that God should allow us oftentimes to be smitten with our own weapons, and to feel how poor a thing it is to depend entirely upon our own sagacity and power.

Now, by brethren, if history is to be anything more than a dead letter to us, we ought to get more stimulation from an incident like this.

Here you have Judah in obvious peril; you have the king standing in the holy place, invoking the presence and care of God. What does God do under such circumstances? This: Almighty God set the men who had come to fight Judah one against another, and when the people of Jehoshaphat began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten; for the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them, and when thay had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. God turned the armies one upon another—turned them against themselves—and the army that came out to fight Jehoshaphat committed suicide. God hath many ways at his disposal of which we know nothing. We look at the things that are seen and temporal; we make calculations; we depend upon things that are visible and substantial; we eliminate the spiritual element and supernatural consideration, and it is possible to be Atheists in practice whilst we are religious in mere sentiment. God can touch the reason of men; God can touch the eyes of men, so that a man shall mistake his brother for an enemy; God can send a blight upon this tremendous host—and these great, wonderful, mighty, boastful, and tremendous powers may be withered like the grass under the touch of the Almighty. Very possibly some nations do require nothing short of the physical sword. Very likely nothing else would meet their case—they must have social humiliation. Let us admit all that, and still it remains true, that they who have God as their captain, have victory as the sure result. I say trust! But my object was not to dwell upon the public and political bearings of the subject, but to hold up the text as a new year's watchword in our spiritual life. "The battle is not yours, but God's." I wish us to hold that at the very beginning of the year, and to take through all the strife, and contention, and unrest, and apprehension, which will surely fall to our lot during the twelve months upon which we have entered. It

rebukes our selfishness ; it humbles our power ; it shows us that patience and trust are better than edged weapons and engines of destruction. Let us dwell upon it with a view of obtaining from it the strength which our circumstances will undoubtedly require.

In the training of our highest life we want principles as well as detailed laws. A law may apply to a particular point. Law may be merely local and temporary. In addition to laws which relate to the details of life, and which are exceedingly admirable for daily use and reference, we want great principles which encompass all time, touch all circumstances, which never vary in their value, and which are always certain in their application. We do not deny that a man may be clever, sagacious, inventive, full of resources as respects daily difficulties and daily trials, without having any deep religious life. But such men, as it were, may be all the while living from hand to mouth. Having no fontal spring, nor any sure place from which they can draw water all the year round, whatever may be their conditions and schemes, they are simply shrewd sagacious men. Full of maxims, proverbs, and precepts, they want the solidity, the grasp, the grander light and mystery of love, which can only be given to men in proportion as they lay hold of great religious principles, which do not change according to policies or situation or climate or conditions or circumstances of any kind, but which go right through to the end of a man's life, and which rejoin him in eternity as surely as they ever came unto him. Now this is the one principle referred to. "The battle of life is not ours but God's." God is far more concerned about us than we can be about ourselves. We make a great deal of fuss about our position. We make all the noise, but he does all the work. We make tumult and demonstration, and show great anxiety and great distraction, and after all our Father which is in Heaven, and who is looking down upon our daily strife, is really more deeply concerned in our highest welfare than we can be ourselves. We see portions of things. We see edges of life. We mistake the fraction for the whole number ; we mistake the decimal for the integer. He sees the whole circle of relations, proportions, and bearings of the inward parts of our life ; and when we think him least careful of us, he may at that very moment be preparing for us, for our enjoyment and strength, some of his richest and best gifts.

In the culture of our highest life we must regard extremity as one phase of divine discipline. Jehoshaphat was driven into a corner. He said openly in the hearing of his people, "We have no might against this great host." We have no resources of our own in this critical, terrible emergency, but "our eyes are upon Thee." And have not many of us reason to be thankful for the extremities into which we have been driven? So long as we had one single inch on which we could stand, we have been self-reliant, boastful, and almost atheistically hopeful. So long as we have had one hair's breadth that we could call our own, we have said even yet we may work this thing out and right the mystery ourselves ; and it was not until that hair's breadth was taken away from us, and we were altogether in extremity that we began to feel how

terrible a thing it would be if there were no God in the heavens, and if no Father's heart were brooding over the earth.

It was when your business became so imperilled, impoverished and racked that you began to cry out for the living God. It was when physicians had given you up, and your best friends had bidden you adieu, that you began to think whether there was not after all some secret in religion you had not yet known, and some safety in piety of which you had been up to that time heedless. And so in many relations of life, we have found in extremity what we never found in prosperity, and our weakness has become our strength. And in the consolidation of our highest life we must remember that repose not strife is the last result of piety. We want most succour when we are most effusive. We are only half-trained and probably ill-trained men, so long as we show signs of anxiety, fear, suspicion, apprehension about the future. Repose, quietness is the last phase of the highest life. Rest is the ultimate condition of motion. If the earth were to go one mile less in a thousand years she would stagger in her course, her velocity is her safety, and the last result of her motion is rest, and so it must be with us. Be assured that the true test of our growth is the depth and reality of our rest and repose. When fear comes upon a nation, in proportion to the depth of piety in that nation will be its calmness. Is there some great cloud lowering and darkening over your dwelling place? In proportion to your piety will be the depth, calm, and placidity of your hearts. You will not be going about here and there, rushing hither and thither, as if depending upon yourself. You will feel the time has now come in which your strength is to stand still, and in which you will be most happy doing nothing. That is a hard lesson for some natures to learn—for men who believe in what they term variety, for men of energy, men of great enthusiasm of spirits. It is a difficult lesson to learn that strength is to stand still and patiently wait for the coming of God. Calmness is not weakness; rest does not display want of ability. Men do not stand still in the true sense of that term, simply because they have nothing they can do; but they stand still with most grace, with complete and impressive dignity, when they are simply waiting for the coming down of God to their rescue. The text addresses all who are trying to live in the fear and love of God under discouraging circumstances. There may be some such here to day. Their business associations are worldly; the influence of these associations is chilling, depressing. What I have to say to you, my friends, is this, "the battle is not yours, but God's." For they that be with you are more than all that can be against you. If you are trusting in God, God will work out his victories in your experience; but if you take the case into your own hands, and manage your own affairs in your own way, God will very likely leave you to see how poor are your best resources and how fruitless is your utmost vigour. Your strength is in the power of Almighty God!

The text also addresses a word to all who are bearing Christian protest against evil. There is a time in which men can do nothing else but protest; a time when fighting ceases, and what man does amounts to nothing; when all that a man can do is to *set* himself as the prophet commanded Jehoshaphat to do. "Set yourselves, stand still, and see the

salvation of the Lord with you." You know what the meaning of this doctrine is. Many a time you would like to go forward into battle and strife, to challenge men to open fight, to test the power of your arms as against their arms, and yet it can't be done. You know, also, what it is to be in circumstances where everything is dead against you. If you speak you are put down; if you offer to move you are driven back. You are one in a multitude, and your feeble voice is drowned by the voice of opposition. Under such circumstances you can but set yourselves; your face may be in the right direction, your protest may be sound, though you cannot go forward into battle and win victories. From this we have to learn the power of faithfulness and the strength of reliance upon God.

There is also a word here to all who are undergoing severe temptation. Some of us are beset from time to time by temptations of a special severity. What, then, are we to consider that the whole answer is in the heart? Are we not to take into account God's watchfulness over our life? Are we to forget the great doctrine, that in these matters of temptation and trying discipline, "The battle is not ours, but God's." Then we come to the doctrine that God is more careful for the salvation of our hearts than we ever can be ourselves. His whole sympathy is with us in the struggle, His whole resourses are at our command. When the fight goes most terribly against us, there is nothing in His heart that He is not willing to communicate in the time of our spiritual extremity.

Here is a word, also, for all who are labouring for the good of the world. Some of us have undertaken to do what we can for the evangelization of all nations. Some of us are missionaries, some Sunday school teachers, some ministers of the gospel, others are heads of houses who are doing their utmost to bring other men to a knowledge of the Lord and obedience in His way. Others are engaged in various manners for the extension of light, purity, and peace. What is our guarantee? Is it in our wit, our own strength, our own power of endurance? No; "The battle is not yours, but God's." What is our hope that the world will one day be subdued to the sceptre of Jesus Christ? It is not in the number of our instrumentalities; it is not in the number of men we send forth into the field to do the Lord's work. What is our guarantee that from the rising of the sun to the setting down of the same there shall be one kingdom, and the king of that empire shall be the Crucified Christ? What is our hope? It is this. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it: "The battle is not yours, but God's." And when we go up to fight, He will work out the victory.

Here is a word also to all who are engaged in controversy on behalf of Christian doctrine. Sometimes I am almost afraid we exclude God from our Christian controversies. There is a danger of thinking it is a battle of one man against another. There is a good deal of striving for mere victory in words. The anxiety of the church is oftentimes the disgrace of the church. If our faith in the living God were what it ought to be we should rest very calmly in the midst of all doctrinal

controversy and contention. Am I told all science is against faith? Am I told that some man has made a very wonderful discovery which will have a hostile effect upon Christian position and Christian service? What becomes me under such intelligence? Anxiety, whimpering, and weakness? Not at all! I say the "battle is not mine, but God's." If any man has succeeded in discovering anything that will throw a light upon any portion of Christian revelation, or that will destroy any portion of Christian revelation, receive it with calmness. Be calm in receiving bad intelligence, and don't jump at conclusions which are against the history of the ages and the history of the church. Let us wait patiently if men are working in this corner or that, in this field or in yonder field. Wait until they get their results put together; till they make a complete case; because after all the battle is not ours but God's, and these men cannot get beyond God's kingdom for any evidence and for any results wherever they are, high as Heaven, deep as hell, down in the sea or flying in the air upon the wings of the morning. They are still within the boundaries of the divine empire, and if God is sending any message by them, let us wait patiently till they tell it all, till they tell it in their best manner and let us quietly and nobly take it into our devoutest consideration.

Our anxiety is our disgrace; our fear is a charge, an accusation against God himself. If we had to defend everything, and to fight everything in our own strength and for our ends, the case would be perfectly different; but when God says to us, "Ye have the treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency of power is of God and not of man,"—when He teaches us that we are servants and not masters, creatures and not creators, with no grasp of eternity,—it becomes us patiently to wait, to stand still, and to see the salvation of the Lord.

Now shall we take this word with us down into the year, and dwell upon it continuously in all our endurances? Christian thinkers, Christian workers, Christian sufferers, shall we take it into the family, and into commerce, and into politics, and into all the relations of life? Remember, that where there is a contest between right and wrong, virtue and vice, Heaven and hell, nobleness and ignobleness, generosity and meanness, "The battle is is not ours, but God's." It is God's fight and it will be God's victory. Resting upon great principles like these, delivering ourselves from the ignominious captivity of little details and petty laws, let us rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him!

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER I.

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

(1) Christ is the preparer of his servants,—"I will make you," how much was involved in that promise! (a) Authority; (b) Qualification. (2) Small beginnings compatible with sublime results. (3) The claims of God over-ride all other claims,—the sons left their father. (4) The discharge of common duties the best preparation for higher calls—two were casting the net into the sea, and two were mending their nets. The transition from one duty to another need not be abrupt. The humblest duty may be very near the highest honour. (5) The place of the servant is after the Master—"come ye after me": they are not invited to equal terms,—they must walk in the King's shadow.

Some hearts respond to Christ *instantly*,—some linger long, and yield as it were with reluctance.

"They left their father Zebedee in the ship": Fathers should never keep back their sons from Christ's service.

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

(1) Men will teach well only as they teach under Christ. (2) Authority is impossible apart from association with the Master. (3) Authority of tone must come from intensity of conviction. (4) Hearers know the voice of authority. (5) The Christian teacher is to shew his supremacy over all other teachers.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unlean spirit; and he cried out,

24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

(1) Wickedness always afraid of purity. (2) Wickedness having no favour to ask of purity, except to

be let alone. (3) Wickedness can always identify the presence of the spirit of Jesus Christ. (4) For this reason, the church is a constant judgment upon all unclean spirits. (5) The completeness of Jesus Christ's authority—His authority in *doctrine,* and His authority in work. (6) Fulness of spiritual life is the guarantee of fulness of spiritual power. Jesus Christ came to this work after the most complete and severe preparation. He had received the Holy Ghost; He had undergone special and long continued temptation in the wilderness: and had returned to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God; and after all this, He encountered with perfect power, the unclean spirits that were in men. This opens the whole subject of *Spiritual Preparation.* Christians have also to meet unclean spirits in society. What if these unclean spirits should baffle the imperfect strength of Jesus Christ's followers? Christians are not at liberty to let unclean spirits alone; they are called to a life-long *contention;* their preparation must be intensely and increasingly *spiritual.* (7) That is the highest fame which is associated with *beneficient* deeds. Jesus Christ became famous, because He had destroyed the dominion of a wicked spirit. The fame of evil is *infamous;* the fame of selfish cunning is mere *notoriety;* the fame of good doing is immortal and blessed renown.

This paragraph may be used as the basis of a discourse upon *First Efforts* in Christian service. (1) Those efforts are often forced upon Christians,—it was so in this case; the wicked spirit challenged the attention of Christ. (2) Christians are to seek opportunities of putting forth such efforts; they are not to *wait* for the challenge, they have also to *give* it.

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.

31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Jesus Christ had both a public and a private ministry; he worked in the synagogue, he worked also in the domestic circle. Here we find Simon's wife's mother sick of the fever and instantly Jesus Christ addressed himself to the difficulty, showing that the Christian ministry may be exercised with great advantage alike in public and in private. Let us learn from it. (1) That the *individual* case as well as the case of the *multitude* should be regarded as worthy of attention. (2) That bodily diseases as well as spiritual ailments are within the sphere of our solicitude; we are to be philanthropic as well as spiritually minded. (3) We are to put ourselves in personal contact with those who suffer. "Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up." We can do little by proxy. We must work with our own hand as though everything depended on it. It is true that what is distinctly known as miraculous power has ceased in the Church, yet there is a higher power than that which works physical miracles. It is still possible for the entrance of a good man into any house to be as the coming in of the light and life of heaven. Christians have it in their power to do a great work in the sick chamber. The raising of the man towards heaven is a greater work than healing him of mere bodily disease. We should never leave a home without blessing it. When Jesus Christ

entered into a house it was known that he was there; His were not mere visits of courtesy, or attention to the claims of routine, wherever He went He took with him healing and manifold spiritual blessings. We are to do the same thing according to our capacity. In this case we see the servants standing behind the Master; Simon and Andrew and James and John were all there but Jesus alone did the work; In our case, if we are the public figures in any work of mercy it is only because our Master is concealed from the common vision. He is still there, still first, and it is only as we realize His presence and position that we can bless men.

The *immediateness* of Christ's cures ought to have some moral suggestion in it. Simon's wife's mother did not *gradually* recover from her affliction; she was cured instantly, and showed the extent of her recovery by immediately ministering to those who were in her house. In the spiritual world, why should not Jesus Christ heal men as suddenly as in the physical world? When men are spiritually healed, how long should they be before they make an attempt to serve others? It is quite true that there may be precipitancy in this matter of spiritual ministry, at the same time it should be remembered that every healed soul should prove its life by seeking to do some good thing for those who are round about. Here, as everywhere, the law holds good,—By their fruits ye shall know them. Jesus Christ did not require that any body of men should examine the case to which he had just devoted himself, in order to procure a testimonial of efficiency; the service which the healed sufferer rendered was, itself, testimonial enough. We know that men have been with Christ, when they are doing Christ's work; all other signs are inadequate: *this* is the absolute standard.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

33. And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

The natural sun set, but the Sun of Righteousness arose upon all those people with healing in His wings. In the evening, as well as in the morning, Jesus Christ was at work. Men come to Jesus Christ according to the urgency of their want. These people felt that urgency in their physical nature, rather than in their souls, consequently they approached Christ with a request that they might be healed. It is well if men can feel their want of Christ at ANY point. If men did but know it, they would find in their hunger and thirst, in their suffering and loss, ground of appeal to Jesus Christ. It is not easy to work from the highest point of nature: men may not be conscious of great spiritual necessities, yet may feel wants of a lower kind: they begin with the lower and ascend to the higher; they who eat of the loaves and fishes, should not leave Christ until they have eaten of the bread from Heaven.

The City Temple.

REVISED TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

WE have no fear whatever of the results of a revision that shall be conducted by competent scholars. If we may venture a word of caution, we should address it impartially to revisionists and non-revisionists. We cannot but think that some revisionists endeavour to make out too strong a case. Some time ago we listened to a discussion which was calculated to suggest the gravest doubts whether after all we have a Bible that can be relied upon as a divine revelation: from the descriptions which were given of the state of the original text, and the sharp criticisms which were made upon the inexactness and disorder of some portions of the English version, we were led to infer that the less that is said about the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible the better. We do not exaggerate the case of some revisionists in putting it thus strongly, but we are decidedly of opinion that they themselves commit an exaggeration which will do much injury to their own cause. Let it be frankly admitted that in many passages verbal alterations of great critical value might be made; let it also be admitted that some portions of the prophetic writings could be arranged much more perspicuously, especially so as to show more clearly their chronological and historical order and culmination; and still further let it be admitted that here and there it may be necessary to remove passages which can be proved to be spurious. And after all these admissions, the foremost scholars will be prepared to contend that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. We venture to think that they should, perhaps, more boldly take their stand upon this doctrine, and proceed to the question of revision as one which cannot impair the integrity and sufficiency of the divine revelation. The very fact that they urge a revision of our translation is proof enough of their confidence in the authority of the holy word, and so it will be understood by all thoughtful men; at the same time, when the question is argued in the hearing of persons who are but imperfectly instructed in such subjects, and especially in the hearing of men who are only too

ready to turn any weapon against the Bible, it is of supreme importance that from beginning to end there should be a clear and bold stand made for the substantial accuracy and imperative authority of the Holy Scriptures as they are now accessible to English readers. Our brethren who plead for the revision of the English version will not suppose that we are attacking their orthodoxy in suggesting that before miscellaneous audiences they should give the subject of revision quite a subordinate place; they need not shirk it, nor need they affect to undervalue it; they should simply guard themselves against the foolish inference which the unlearned and giddy will persist in drawing, viz., that consiging the chaotic state of the translation it will be prudent to wait until the new Bible is ready. Undoubtedly this is a foolish (we are tempted to say insane) inference, as viewed from the standpoint of learned and devout revisionists, but those gentlemen who have enjoyed the advantage of prolonged and severe mental discipline must make some allowance for hearers who are unaccustomed to judicial criticism. Give the world at large to understand that perhaps twenty thousand emendations can be made in the English version, that several passages have no title to a place in the sacred canon, and that the prophecies are in a state of well-nigh hopeless confusion, and the probability is that multitudes of ill-instructed men will turn such admissions into occasions of disregarding or despising the Word of God. This possible mischief is easily avoidable. Assert the sufficiency of the English version for all the main purposes of a revelation, viz., to show the way of salvation and regulate the whole conduct of life,—be clear, strong and most decided on this point, and then proceed to questions which can be understood only by scholars.

We would remind anti-revisionists of a fact which they appear to overlook, the fact that no *translation* is inspired. By their fear to submit the English version to criticism they inflict injury on the cause they would gladly serve. Scholarship is the servant of truth. If any passages can be improved in form or expression, we should be prepared to demand that the improvement be effected with all possible promptitude. Error should have no place in Christian teaching: at all costs of tradition and sentiment it must go! Most earnestly would we discourage the policy of fear, as uncalled-for and certainly most unworthy of Christian men. Let criticism be invited, and even challenged if need be, for truth is higher than the inadequate forms in which it has often been enshrined. We have a strong conviction that when scholars have brought under one view all the instances in which re-translation could be adopted with advantage, the number will be less than is now generally supposed, and certainly the substantial improvements will not add much to the value of the Bible as it appears in the present English version. Marginal emendations and suggestions we should welcome with cordial gratitude, but we have no sanguine expectations as to the worth of a complete revision of the translation. One thing we should earnestly deprecate,—the modernising of many old English phrases: equivalent meanings won't satisfy us; we must have the old wine in the old vessels. This may be very sentimental, yet the heart demands it and the mind will be content with nothing less.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, January 12, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-SECOND NOONDAY SERVICE.)

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him."—1 CORINTHIANS, II., 14.

I WISH to show, by analogies and illustrations known to everybody, the *reasonableness* of the doctrine which is thus laid down by the apostle Paul. There is nothing here which is not commonly acknowledged and insisted on in the everyday walks of life. To show this may be a great help to some minds; to those, for example, who suppose that where there is no religion there is no mystery, and consequently, that if we could get clear of religion we should get clear of all mystery. I believe that the true interpreter of God (whenever he shall arise) will be able to show that what is distinctively known as Christian religion is only more mysterious because it is more sublime than any other part of the economy of life and nature. The one great mystery is GOD himself. All other mysteries are as shadows thrown by that burning light. Interpretation—the power of seeing things as they are—is not a question of culture so much as of sympathy and insight. Sympathy and insight cannot be taught in schools. The highest gifts cannot be given to men through the medium of books; so unless a man have the hearing ear and seeing eye as the direct gifts of God, he never can be taught to be a profound and sure interpreter. Right answers to hard questions have never been suggested by flesh and blood; they have always been given to the Peters of the world by the Father which is in Heaven. God gives us the spirit of discernment, the power of seeing spiritual realities and relations. It is not a natural endowment common to the whole human species: it is a distinct and special gift of God. "Now we have received not the spirit

of the world but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit, for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And yet it has strangely come to pass in the study of religious problems, that some men have asserted the sufficiency of unaided reason. Strange, because the very men have in less important enquiries gladly availed themselves of all the instruments, mediums, and helps which inventive genius has supplied. I wish to show the inconsistency of the reasoning of such men. I wish to show that they leave their common sense behind them when they enter into the consideration of the elements which constitute profoundly true and successful religious enquiry.

Here, for example, is a large brilliant diamond. You look at the stone, and it pleases you by its wondrous whiteness and lustre. You admire it, you praise it very highly. You say, "This stone is without fault of any kind—a most beautiful and precious gem." The lapidary places in your hand a magnifying glass of great power, and bids you look at the centre of the stone. You look. The lapidary enquires what you see, and you reply, "Why, there is a black spot at its very centre! I did not see that without the glass. To the naked eye the stone looked perfectly white—entirely without flaw or fault; and yet now that I look at the stone through the glass, why I wonder that I could not have seen so great a speck as that!" The lapidary says the naked eye cannot receive it, neither can it know it, because it is microscopically discerned. And nobody arises to contest the reasoning of the lapidary: no man ventures to say to him, "Sir, you have introduced a most painful mystery into human thought and human inquiry." Such people are rather glad that a medium has been supplied by which the most hidden fault can be brought to light.

Yonder are two shining surfaces. You look at both of them and pronounce them intensely brilliant. You say, "There must be great fire there, otherwise such a glowing surface could not have presented itself." A scientific man who overhears you says, "One of those surfaces is not light at all—has not light in itself." And you, a man of independent judgment, a free-thinker and noble-minded enquirer, turn round upon him and tell him, circuitously but yet virtually, that he's a fool: can't you believe your own eyes? what were your eyes given to you for if you could not see such evident realities as this before you? And you treat the scientific man with contempt and disdain. "Now," he says, "just look through this instrument, will you?" and he brings to you the polariscope, teaches you the use of that instrument, and when you have looked according to his directions, you turn to him and beg his pardon for having so rudely contradicted him, you say that you never could have supposed that the thing was as it has really been proved to be; you could not have seen that the one surface was primary light and the other was but reflected light, until you looked at both surfaces through the crystals of the polariscope. And now the scientific man says to you, "The naked eye cannot receive it, neither know it, because it is polariscopically discerned." You thank him as a philosopher, you are obliged to him as a discoverer.

And yonder are two men who have undertaken a mineral survey. It has been supposed by some people that there is iron in the field which these men are now traversing. One of the men is a mineralogist, a man of science, who knows the limitations of his condition, and who consequently avails himself of instruments which science has supplied. The other is a grand man, who believes that if he cannot find things out with his naked eyes and his naked fingers, that nothing can be found out or shall be found out. Not at all a bigot, you observe. A man of latitudinarian spirit, of all-encompassing and all hopeful charity; belongs to no sect, to no flag, to no banner, with no passwords, and does not believe in anything that is dogmatic or defined. He goes over the field, does this latter man—he soon goes over it. Men of that kind have nothing to arrest them on their way; it is a pity they were not winged, that they might get away sooner. Having gone over the field, he says, "There is no iron there!" But the scientific man is walking slowly over the ground, holding in his hand a little box, a little crystal box, walking slowly, watching the instrument that is enclosed in that box. Presently the needle dips. The man stops there, and says, "In this place there is iron!" Can you see it? No. Can you touch it? No. But in this place he repeats, "I tell you there is iron!" He walks on again. The needle is perfectly steady: yard after yard the needle is perfectly steady and still, but suddenly the needle dips. As the finger of God it points out to men the riches of the earth. The other man has gone home to tell everybody that there is no iron in that field, and, of course, being an independent free-minded experienced man, he is instantly believed by everyone. The other man says, "There is iron in that field, and in my judgment it will repay digging for." The scientific man then digs for iron and finds it, and then turns round to hear what men have to say about him and his discoveries. He says, "The naked eye, the unassisted faculty, cannot receive it, neither know it, for it is magnetically discerned." We then say that he is very clever, and tardily yield him the confidence which he has so richly deserved.

Look at this ruddy-faced boy. You can't walk out with this boy forty yards but he challenges you to leap a five-barred gate, or to have a game at throwing stones at something, or leaping over ditches about twelve feet wide; and you, not being so boyish as he is, respectfully decline the challenge, but you say, "What a vigorous lad that is! what power, what spring he has! There will be a long life there and a happy one." A scientific man comes to your house: you talk physiology. The scientific man proposes to examine this ruddy-faced boy, your companion in the field. He applies an instrument to the region of the heart, and suddenly there is a changed expression of countenance on the part of the physician. Turning aside to you he says, "This boy will never see five-and-twenty. Has he had rheumatic fever? There is valvular affection of the heart, and before he is five-and-twenty I am afraid he will be gone." Of course you disbelieve it. You saw the boy in the field vaulting a gate, leaping a ditch, throwing stones many a yard, and you can't disbelieve your eyes—that would be unmanly and unworthy of the independence of manhood. The doctor says, "Apply

your ear to this instrument and listen for yourself." You do so, and hear an irregularity and peculiarity of beat, which you, not being a medical man, cannot understand, and yet you know that there is a discrepancy in the pulsations. The physician says to you, "The untrained uneducated ear cannot receive this, neither know it, because it is stethoscopically discerned." And you tardily, as in the former case, give your confidence to the adviser, and beseech him to lend you his aid under circumstances so unexpected and distressing.

Here is a piece of paper, and you hand it round to your friends, to every man amongst them, and they say, "Whatever have you handed this blank piece of paper round for? are you playing a hoax upon us? There is nothing upon this piece of paper. Have we to write something upon it?" And you take it back and say, "Is there really nothing upon the paper?" and every voice says "No! can't we believe our own eyes? We are unanimously of opinion that there is nothing upon it." You just hold it to the fire for the space of a minute or two, and lo, it is written all over! You have developed the secret ink.

Now, in all these things, my brethren, we confess our need of instruments. The unassisted faculties of nature are not enough. We must be indebted to mediums. Imagine a man who disbelieves everything he cannot see with the naked eye. Suppose that it came to pass to-morrow that everything shall be taken away which cannot be read by the naked eye, or that has not been discovered by the naked eye. What will come? Shut up the heavens, for astronomy must go; and cover over the fields, for botany tells but little to the naked eye. All science, indeed, would be impoverished, insulted, degraded. Yet the man who cannot read his own mother's letter without an eye-glass, insists upon reading the infinite and eternal God by his own unassisted powers,—declare that if he cannot settle this great question by natural reason, that there is nothing at all worth being settled,—says, that whatsoever is too mysterious for his natural understanding is but worthy of insult, degradation and contempt. I charge him, in God's house and before God's face, with insulting his own common-sense and contradicting the highest experiences of mankind.

The same principle may be illustrated in spheres where instruments are not required. Here are two men listening to the same piece of music. The one man is inspired, enraptured, thrilled, and says mentally, "I would this might go on for ever! The sweetness, the purity of that wondrous tone, let it never cease! I would abide here constantly." The other man is saying mentally, "I wonder when they'll be done? it seems a long time!" He looks at the programme with weary eyes, and mentally resolves that will be the last occasion of the kind whenever *he* will be there. The best ear can't receive these things or know them, for they are musically discerned. There are that have ears that cannot hear and eyes that cannot see. The one man (the musical man) would be pained, really tormented, if one note were the thousandth part of a shade wrong, he would feel it intensely, it would go right through him like a spear. But all the notes might be wrong so far as the other man knew. If there was only noise enough, he would think it was not so very bad after all.

Here are two men looking at the same picture. The one man is chained to the spot: it is to him an enigma, a mystery, a wonder, and a delight; he has never seen such combinations before; he was never before thrilled under such wondrous effects. A man behind him with a thick shilling catalogue says that he does not see very much in that, and hastens on to something that has got superficies, no matter what the superficies may be: only let it be extensive enough. Paint for such men with a broom!

Now, my brethren, the application of all these instances is to the things of God as accessible to the spirit of man. The things of God are not naturally discerned. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." There are blind minds as well as blind eyes. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is perfectly reasonable. If a man contends that mystery begins with the Bible, he knows not the world he is living in or the elements by which he is surrounded. In the light of these reflections we may see the adaptation of the method of the gospel to our human condition. What has God done in the matter of revelation? God has condescended to have a book written for us;—a tremendous risk, for God to accept the inconvenience of writing and printing his revelation. It might have been purely intellectual, purely spiritual without objectivity, and yet he has condescended to have something written for us. Just as you condescended, when you were a long way from home, to sit up one whole hour to print about six lines in large hand for that little child of yours at home. And you were never so much a man as when you were so much a child. God comes to us knowing the dumbness and blindness of his creatures, and sets everything before us He possibly can set,—to appeal, in the first instance, to our lowest faculties, and then brings us on from that point until sanctuaries are no more wanted, printed Bibles are no more wanted, sun and moon are dismissed from their spheres, institutionalism goes down in spirituality—the Lamb is the light and God is the temple! We may see, also, the reasonableness of divine dependence in reading the gospel. There are many things, as we have just shown, which cannot be read without instruments and mediums. God comes and says to us, "I have something to say to you which you never could hear by your own unaided faculties; but I will give you the faculty, I will give you the capacity to receive, and that capacity to its utmost limits." I say this is not a mystery that is *opposed* to reason, though it may be a mystery which is *above* reason. We also see in the light of these illustrations the sublimity of the truths announced by the gospel. Instruments will read the works, but instruments cannot read the word. Only God can reveal Himself. What man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man that is in him—even so mark the connecting link—the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. It is thus put upon reasonable grounds. As with men so with God. You cannot read the things that are in your brother's mind: no man can read the things that are in your mind, you alone can reveal them. The apostle

carries up the argument until he shows its bearing upon the infiniteness, the depth, the wonderfulness, the whole Godhead of God.

As ministers, we are not to be discouraged and driven back in our godly work, because some people cannot understand us, and others say we are trifling with their reason or insulting their common sense. Take it as a matter of fact, my young brethren who are preparing for this work, there will always be men in the world to whom your best preaching will be foolishness ; simply because they have not the spiritual faculty of taking hold of what you are saying. Now do we wish to have this discernment? "If men being evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not." Don't expect to see all things at once—the whole breadth and lustre of the Godhead at once—begin at a little point. In the first place, you may in spiritual things as in material, see men as trees walking, dim outlines, flitting shadows ; but don't despise the twilight! If we already have this discernment, then surely to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Inspiration is not a fixed quantity, it is a variable quantity,—we may increase the volume of our inspiration by diligently, lovingly and patiently waiting upon God. "To this man will I look, to him who is a broken and contrite heart, and who trembleth at my word." "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings will God ordain praise." The first shall be last, and last shall be first. And by things that are not, will God secure great results in the world.

Don't let us therefore loose our present insight, our present power of interpretation, our present power of discernment and appreciation. Let us grow. We can only grow by prolonged intercourse with God. He who gives his days to study and his nights to prayer shall see Heaven opened, and his whole life shall be a Jacob's dream : he will never, never miss that wonderful ladder which connects the worlds : that marvellous staircase of light up which the angels go, and in going bid us follow on. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Thy home is with the humble, Lord ! Have we a right spirit? God will not say anything to people who are boastful of their own wisdom, and who glorify themselves in the light of their own reason,—but he is never done talking to the child-heart that says in the dark midnight and the bright noonday, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER I.

We are not to consider all this pressure upon Jesus Christ as an illustration of mere *selfishness* on the part of the sufferers and their friends. That would entirely depend upon their spirit; in the act of their coming to Christ, there was nothing necessarily selfish. Men may come to Christ for spiritual advantages, and yet may charge themselves with selfish motives; at all events the devil will not be slow to suggest that in coming to Christ for salvation, men merely act upon a selfish instinct. Such an unclean spirit is to be resisted, and to bring down upon itself the admonition of holy anger. The selfishness will be seen afterwards, if it really exist: to go to Christ that we should be healed ourselves and then to say nothing about His gracious power to others is to exhibit the intensest selfishness; but to go ourselves, and then make our own healing a testimony in his favour is to preach the gospel, is to approach the benevolence of God himself.

By so much then may men test their own spirit; if they are content to enjoy what they term spiritual advantages without publishing the Saviour to others, they are justly chargeable with most criminal selfishness. Gratitude will always make eloquent preachers.

The fact that Jesus Christ did not suffer the devils to speak shows His perfect dominion over the spiritual region. All devils are weak in the presence of the Saviour. They are mighty and terrible to us because of our many infirmities, but in the presence of the bold man who is clothed with perfect holiness all devils are infinitely weak. The lesson is evident: we are mighty only as we are in Christ.

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

There is something very touchingly illustrative of our Saviour's humanity in this verse: he could have prayed upon his couch; none might have known how close was his intercourse with God as he continued in the house; yet as he worked after the sun was set so he departed to pray before the sun had risen! If the master required to pray, can the servants live without communion with God? The subject suggested by this verse may be called *Morning Devotion.* To begin the day with God is the only method of setting one's-self above all its events and triumphing over them with perfect mastery. Our life will be poor if there be in it no solitary places where we pray. True life can never be developed among throngs and noises; we must betake ourselves into desert places; in a word we must get away from men and view life from such distance as may be realized by intimate divine fellowship. As it is necessary to stand back from his work in order that the

artist may see how it is shaping itself, so it is often necessary for us who are doing Christ's work to retire into solitary places that we may look at it from the altar of worship or perhaps from the valley of humiliation. How rapidily Christ lived! how he consumed himself in his ministry! this should be an appeal to Christians calling them to enthusiasm and to vehemence in work. Jesus Christ did not *remain* in solitary places, he went to the sacred fountain that he might prepare himself to return to society and do the work of the common day. A discourse might be founded upon these words showing the *Religious uses* of Time. (1) There would be social service such as we have seen in the life of Christ. (2) There would be *public* ministry in which crowds might enjoy our Christian teaching; (3) There would be sacred devotion in which the soul will hold close intercourse with God. These uses should not be separated one from the other, the teacher should show that all these uses really make up *one* true ministry. The incident may also be used to show the place of prayer in the earnest life. There is a sentimentalism which says work is prayer, so it is, and yet if we work without praying our work will be powerless. Work is only prayer in so far as it is done in a *prayerful* spirit. He who works must pray and he who truly prays must also work. In this verse the narrator uses a summary expression; he could only say that Jesus Christ prayed, what he says in his prayer, what entreaties he breathed on be half of himself and his work, never can be known. There are also passages in our own life which can never be written; we ourselves have offered prayers which it is impossible to recal so intense was their agony, so comprehensive their desire; yet though unable to recal the intercession in detail yet are strong in the memory that they were offered: the individual petitions have been forgotten, but the great exercise has strengthened, and the great answer nourished, the soul.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

The true disciple always knows where to find the Master: the disciples knew the habits of their Lord: they knew that in some hidden place he could be found in the early hours of the day; at all events they knew that Jesus Christ would be found in the path of usefulness or preparation for usefulness. Do men know where they can find *us?* Are our Christian habits so distinct and unchangeable that our friends can with certainty explain our position? The picture in the 37th verse is most impressive, viz., namely, the picture of all men seeking for Jesus. What the disciples said in their wondering delight, shall one day be literally true—*all men will be in search of the Saviour of the world.* In the first instance the Saviour sought all men, and in the second all men will seek the Saviour. "We love him because he first loved us." Instant response to the desire of the world as shown in Christ's readiness still further to preach the gospel. His object in life was undivided and its unity was its omnipotence. We are only strong in proportion to the concentration of our powers. Wherever we are we ought to be within the sphere of our ministry; and it ought to

be an easy transition from one department of duty to another, Jesus Christ knew wherefore he had come forth, and it is incumbent upon us that we too should know our mission in life. No man can work mightily and constantly except in so far as he has a distinct and worthy object before him; the object must stir his whole nature and move him by an importunate compulsion amounting in fact to inspiration. When a man begins to question the utility or practicability of his object in life he enfeebles himself. There are many qestionable objects which men set before themselves, and it is our delight as Christian observers to mark how they break down, and how those who were pursuing them abandon them with sorrow and disgust. We have to set before all men an object sufficiently simple to engage the affections of the feeblest and sufficiently sublime to absorb the energies of the strongest. Jesus Christ preached, and he called his servants to the same work. Preaching can never fail to be one of the mightiest instruments in stirring the human mind, and in moulding human society. Individual preachers may become feeble; even distinguished ministers may cool in the enthusiasm with which they undertook their great work; but preaching, as instituted by Jesus Christ and exemplified in his own ministry, can never cease to be one of the most effective agencies in human education and progress. Preaching will be powerless except in proportion as it relates to Christ.

BROKEN COLUMNS.

Under this heading we shall occasionally give Outlines of Sermons.

CAIN and ABEL: *Three Experiments and Three Failures.*

Genesis, IV., 2, &c.

I. The *Family* idea won't keep men right. Cain and Abel were brothers. II. *Religious ceremonial* won't keep right. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifice. III. Religious *persecution* won't keep men right. Cain killed his brother, but a voice cried against him. What will keep men right? The love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ENOCH: *Accounting for men's disappearance from the earth.*

"God took him."—Gen., v., 24.

I. We should take an interest in the *destiny* of men. II. We should recognise the hand of God in the removal of men. III. We should believe in the *particularity* of God's oversight of men.

When God takes a good man—(1) He takes that man to a *higher* blessing; (2) He will fill that man's place as a Christian worker *upon earth;* (3) He trains survivors to-

wards *self-reliance* and emulous work.

Or the subject may be treated thus—

(1) God took him,—the assertion of a *sovereign right.*

(2) God took him,—an illustration of *divine regard.*

(3) God took him,—an assurance of *eternal blessedness.*

(4) God took him,—a pledge that all like him will be *associated.*

Good News for Bad Men.

"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."—Luke, xv., 2.

(a) This is a *true* charge; (b) This is a true charge brought by men who did not intend it to be true in its deepest import; (c) This charge was the very *charm* and *glory* of Christ's life,—so much for the impotence of the wrath of man!

"This man receiveth sinners,"—then—

(1) He is DIFFERENT from all other men. More *generous*, more *hopeful*, more *independent.*

(2) He is SUPERIOR to all other men. Other men would have been *contaminated:* other men would have been *overwhelmed* by *numbers:* other men would have feared *unpopularity.*

(3) He is the HOPE of all other men. As men come to know themselves to be sinners, they will want a friend.

"And eateth with them,"—then

(1) He is *human;* (2) He is *gracious;* (3) He is *approachable.*

Application: Jesus Christ eats our common bread, and we must eat him as the bread which cometh down from heaven. Jesus Christ turns our common engagements into religious worship. Jesus Christ never eats our bread without increasing and blessing it.

The Gospel a light.

"His marvellous light."—1 Peter, ii., 9.

The gospel constantly claims all that is figurative in the light of the sun and moon and stars as significant of its own nature and mission. In the gospel as in God himself there is no darkness at all. Not only is the gospel described as light but as *marvellous* light: not a dim twilight, but a blaze of glory, a splendour before which all other splendour wanes. Why is this a *marvellous* light?

I. Because it is a light upon SPIRITUAL REALITIES. The sun can light up landscapes, kingdoms, and worlds, but where is the light which can reveal man to himself and God to man? We need another light,—a light above the brightness of the sun.

(a) The gospel throws a marvellous light upon *sin*; (b) upon the holiness and awfulness of divine *law*; (c) upon the elements which are requisite to a perfect *reconciliation* to God.

II. Because it is a light upon SPIRITUAL DESTINIES. Man can throw no light on his own future. He can but speculate and hope. The gospel distinctly deals with the mystery of time to come. (a) Judgment; (b) Rewards and Punishments; (c) Duration; (d) Service.

The fact that the gopel claims to be a marvellous light; shows—

1. That the world is in a state of *marvellous darkness.*

2. That the diffusion of the gospel is a *diffusion of light.*

3. That all who believe the gospel should walk as *children of the day.*

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, January 19, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-THIRD NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, let our waiting before Thee be a season of hallowed joy. May this hour, taken out of the common week, be to us Sabbatic; may our strength be recovered,—may our hope escape from every cloud, and clearly see the far-off land where all thy children serve Thee without faintness because without sin. Help us to live all our days in the spirit of Jesus Christ. May we see far beyond the cruelty and the shame of the Cross: may it be to us the mystery of love, the symbol of grace, the end of sin and the beginning of Heaven. Everyday may Jesus Christ become dearer to our hearts. May all things be seen through Him. From his life may we take our law, and to his glory may we consecrate our redeemed and sanctified powers. ETERNAL ONE! pity and help all who are passing down the shallow river of Time to the shoreless sea of Thine own Eternity. Amen.

SCATTERING AND WITHHOLDING.

"There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."—PROVERBS, XI., 24.

TWO of the principal words in this text are of course *scattereth* and *withholdeth*. We ought to be on our guard against mistaken definitions and incomplete meanings of such words. We ought also to be on our guard against short-sightedness and ill-managed perspective in the consideration of doctrines and the planning of life. Half a meaning may amount to a falsehood. A wrong angle of vision may deceive as to distance, magnitude, and proportion.

For example:—One would say that to scatter anything is to part with it without advantage, to loose it; and that withhold, to keep back, is undoubtedly to save and to retain. The text teaches us that this may be quite a mistake on our part. It must further be understood that all scattering is not advised, nor is all withholding condemned. The word scatter and the word withhold must therefore be regarded with modifications. There is reckless scattering and there is wise withholding. It will be seen, therefore, that the text is not to be taken in its literalness; it is to be examined in its spirit. We must get into the method of the counsel, and understand the genius and scope of the doctrine. Happily we have no need to go further in search of illustration of the truth of the text; we find it on every farm, in every business, in every school. The farmer will tell us that if the land be starved the crop will be starved as well. The merchant will tell us that if he be not often liberal in his outlay—liberal almost to the point of apparent recklessness—he will be short in his income. Some crafty persons will even give subscriptions to societies which they would gladly sink to the bottom of the sea, because these subscriptions come back to them in the way of patronage. Their donations are investments. Their charities are speculations. They turn benevolence itself into merchandise; they yoke generosity to the chariot of Mammon. Still they are preachers, and preachers of wisdom. If they abuse the principle, they exemplify it by thinking that scattering may mean getting. Their charities, their gifts, their plaudits, and their liberalities are often so much manure with which they hope to enrich the harvest of their own fortunes. All these considerations show us the importance of understanding what is meant by scattering, and what is meant by withholding. Let us, in our morning meditation, seek with all eagerness of Christian hope to know the meaning of both parts of the text, that we may order the scheme of our life by its profound and most excellent wisdom.

The text calls us to benevolent activity founded on religious faith. Not to activity only, but to benevolent activity; not to a benevolent activity only, but to a benevolent activity founded on a religious basis—and not a religious basis as the expression of a selfish sentimentality, but the only true and abiding religious basis, that which we find in the Cross and in the life of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the text enlarges and glorifies life by calling into play elements and considerations which lie beyond the present and the visible. The very exercise of scattering carries blessing with it,—brings with it a peculiar and special benefit. Observe, I say, the very exercise of scattering, without pointing in a religious or Christian direction,—the very act of scattering breaks up the mastery of selfishness, it enlarges the circle of kindly interests, it shows that there is something in the world beyond our own personal concerns. It were better, therefore, better for man, better as a discipline, better for his heart, better for every quality that is worth having, that a man should go to the river so many times a year and throw his money into it, than that he should never, never give anything away! Is that a hard saying? I believe it is perfectly true, that rather than never part with anything except in the way of mere bargain-making it were better to go to the river and to throw some part of our property

into it. What, then, of the benefit which accrues upon wise giving, upon philanthropic service, upon activities which bear the dear name and are inspired by the blessed spirit of Jesus Christ? Take a case. A man gives away a sovereign in Christ's name and for Christ's sake. Look at the elements which constitute that act and give it value. The man made the sovereign honestly; it is his, in point of fair service, by what is called right. If he keeps that sovereign he will break no law in commerce; if he will it away to his family, he will violate no law in social equity; if he spend it upon himself, society will not condemn him. Yet the man deliberately gives that sovereign away to a poor child, to a friendless stranger, to a Christian society. See what lies behind the deed. The man says, in effect if not in words, "The money may be mine, but I myself am not my own. How then can anything be mine, except temporarily, and under laws of stewardship and responsibility? I have no property in myself; I am bought with a price; I am God's agent. So far as I have given society an equivalent for this sovereign, it is mine; but the strength, the skill, the knowledge by which I gained it are the gifts of God. The image is Cæsar's, but the gold is God's. I will hold what I have as Christ's; holding it so, I instantly yield it at his call, saying,—Thine—oh wounded blessed Christ—thine is the right!" So this giving away of the sovereign is not an off-hand deed; it is not done flippantly; it is not done to save appearances; it is not done from external social pressure; it becomes a great religious act, a solemn sacrifice, a holy thank-offering.

So to give, so to scatter, is to increase. In many cases the man gets back two sovereigns for one, or fifty for one; but if he did not get a penny back he always increases in heart-volume, in joy, in love, in most mysterious and hallowed peace; the heavens become brighter; his cup of comfort is sweetened, he walks on a greener earth, he looks up to God through a bluer sky. Beneficence is its own compensation. Charity empties the heart of one gift that it may make room for a larger. He who lives towards God, whose life is an ascending line, will meet God coming to him with blessings unimagined and unceasing. "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth others shall be watered also himself."

Some of you are thinking at this moment that it is rather a dangerous doctrine to preach, that if a man give away one sovereign he may get two, and perhaps he may get fifty back. I quite anticipated the objection, and I paused a moment to say something in order that I might recur to it with greater force. Understand, that if any man shall give God anything in the way of having it back again, that man will be disappointed, humiliated, and justly so. It is not an investment; it is not an appeal to some greedy, crafty wretch who says, "Well, if that be the way, I shall give away a sovereign just to try if I can get two sovereigns back for it." Will you? Try it! and you will never see your sovereign again. Then you won't try it? Don't! We can't have the footsteps of such evil beasts upon the floor of God's sanctuary. It is when we give it away free from all self-consciousness in the deed,

when there is no calculation about it, when under the inspiration of love we touch the very holiness of God,—it is then that the grain of corn cast into the earth dies, germinates, fructifies, and returns a hundredfold. I bear witness, simply and solemnly, without affectation and with the emphasis of thankfulness, that I never yet, in any happy moment of sympathy with the dear Christ of God, did a generous deed without God hastening, as it were, to repay the deed, to make me a wiser, stronger, tenderer man. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to one of these my disciples shall in no wise lose his reward." No man works for God for nothing. His water is turned into wine, and that wine flows in unceasing blessed streams of divine love and comfort.

I know of two men who started business with this vow:—"We shall give to God one-tenth of all our profits." The first year the profits were considerable; the tithe was consequently considerable. The next year there was increase in the profits and of course increase in the tithe; in a few years the profits became very, very large indeed, so that the partners said to one another, "Is not a tenth of this rather too much to give away? suppose we say now we shall give a twentieth?" And they gave a twentieth,—and the next year the profits had fallen down; the year after that they fell down again, and the men said to one another as Christians should say in such a case, "Have not we broken our vow? Have we not robbed God?" And in no spirit of selfish calculation, but with humility of soul, self-reproach and bitter contrition, they went back to God and told him how the matter stood, prayed his forgivness, renewed their vow, and God opened the windows of Heaven and came back to them and all the old prosperity. I do not wish to make too much of this story, but I know it as a fact. There is no occasion to fear superstition in making such vows. If they be made in the spirit of selfishness, they will end in nothing; if in the spirit of little children, no man can tell the blessing.

The other side of the text is as emphatic and as often illustrated in practical life as the first: "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Selfishness is suicidal; selfishness lives in gloom; selfishness injects poison into every stream of life; selfishness actually makes the world less and less every day, degrades man, dishonours life; it is blasphemy against the infinite goodness and mercy of God! Selfishness is most intensely selfish when it assumes the name of prudence. When a man says he must be just before he is generous, that man cannot be just, that man is a thief in his heart. Selfishness is often most base when it calculates aloud at the dinner table and the tea table arithmetically, and shows the world the whole process of its dry arithmetic. Souls cannot be trained on arithmetic. When selfishness chatters proverbs, which are but half truths,—when in the interests of so-called honesty it robs God with both hands, then it has reached a depth beyond which there is no depth. Let it be known that upon such God has branded the stamp of failure. God is against thee, oh selfish heart! There may be great accumulation, may there not? Yes,—yet not one moment's enjoyment of it all! There may be good

standing at the bankers, may there not? Yes, and no foothold in any human heart. The property may outweigh the proprietor. As the stuff increases, the man diminishes. As the deposit enriches, the depositor impoverishes. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him,—went back over all the old places,—and he could not be found. When God blows upon a man, who can find him? The whole universe is a protest against the selfish man. The light-streaming sun, the former and the latter rain, the life-laden air, the odorous flower, the gift-bearing seasons, and yonder dear Father giving himself away in every pulsation of his being,—these are against thee, oh selfish heart! and when thou totterest towards the gate of dismission to find thine own place, thou shalt depart without regret as thou hast lived without love. The selfish man going out of the world. Such is the picture. He brought nothing in, he can take nothing out. Yonder he is at the further end of life. Room for the leper! Let everything that hath life and beauty and hope and power of worship shrink from him! He is a leper, let him go! He is self-dammed, and there is no redemption. It is a singular thing this: That men by grasping lose; that by scraping they get nothing; that by having great bunches of keys to lock up seven-fold doors they can't find what they have locked away—there must be some way inside from the back—some way spirits get into it—at all events the thing goes. God has many ways of turning selfish man's very success to failure and disappointment. The darkness, the mildew, the locust, the frost, the lightning, the winds, are his servants. Thou shalt carry much seed into the field and shalt gather but little in, for the locusts shall consume it. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough, ye drink but ye are not filled with drink, ye clothe you but there is none warm. He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and ye shall not be satisfied. How God mocks the bad man! How he can turn the wicked man's very success into failure, and how out of selfish ambition he can bring the scorpion whose sting is death!

Now we must be careful to observe that though the text is found in the Old Testament, the principle is distinctly held by Jesus Christ. It is not a temporary law, it is a moral principle, it is universal and unchangeable in its force and application. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." What do you think of that in the light of common-sense? You non-christian hearers, it must sound very foolish to you. A man that gains his life *loses* it. A man who rises early in the morning and striving hard all day to keep himself, is actually diminishing in the very quality of his manhood, the very volume of his being.

A man says, "Now then, I am going in for influence." And so he dresses for influence, looks for influence, smiles for influence, coughs for influence, turns round and round for influence, and by the time he has had seven years at it, people are laughing all round, and saying, "What an extraordinarily foolish man that is!" At the end of a much shorter time than that such a man has all the influence he deserves, and that is no influence at all. All great life, divine life, life like God's, is not to be calculated about and argued out, and worked out in that ridiculous fashion. Self-forgetfulness coming out of self-crucifixion, and then you will have blessings, until there is not room to contain them. By all means get out of yourself, if you would really do yourself the greatest possible service. Scatter liberally with the right motive if you would gather in the harvest, before which you may say truly—not with atheistic insanity, but with Christian reverence—"Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years."

It is the same with you preachers of the gospel. I have heard of a man who had guinea sermons and guinea-and-a-half sermons. If he went to a place where they gave him a guinea for his sermon, he gave them to understand that he had in reality preached them a guinea-and-a-half sermon—one of his very best. Don't let us have sermons of that kind. Let every occasion be the greatest in our lives. If there be but ten men present, lavish the wealth of your intellect and the treasure of your heart upon the few that hear you, and you will have a better sermon still next time. It may not be delivered quite so well; you get weary, tired and exhausted oftentimes. The carriage is not worthy of the gun. Still, whosoever shall give his best and do his best, always shall grow more and more. He shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, he will not know when the drought cometh.

Some of you, young friends, have your scheme of life yet to begin. Don't be narrow; don't be little; don't be what is termed prudent, in the poor shallow sense of that word. Be true, be noble, be self-oblivious. Have you natural amiability and philanthropic love of others? Encourage that. Don't live inwards; live from your hearts outward. And who knows but that Jesus Christ may meet you and show you the higher way, the only true and living way? Let me say this, that all schemes which are mere schemes, mere programmes and methods of our own are self-defeating if they are not conceived and executed in the spirit of self-crucifixion. Don't be a mere plan. Be a great soul, a holy life, and may the Great Father gather you to his heart and bless you evermore! Amen.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER I.

We have a distinct gospel to unfold, and if we are to be faithful to our calling, that gospel will be found more than sufficient to supply our own want as preachers and to meet all the necessities of the world. Jesus Christ preached *and cast out devils*, and we have to do the same thing. We may not meet the devil in the same form as that in which he presented himself during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ, but we have to meet him in all the subtilty, the insidiousness and the terribleness of his unchanging and unchangeable nature. The preacher must make up his mind that there are still devils to be cast out; every man carries within him his own devil, some indeed *carry legion*. The only exhaustive is the Saviour, and we are called to tell this fact and to persuade men to avail themselves of His delivering power.

Under these verses might be shown the *positive* and the *negative* work of the christian ministry; the positive work being to preach the gospel, the negative to cast out devils. Great service would be done to humanity by fully developing the idea that all evil purposes and dispositions are to be associated distinctly with the name of the devil. We are to tell men not merely that we seek to make them better by conducting them into the knowledge of new doctrines, but we are to take our stand before them as men who have come to deliver them from the personal power of the devil. There is hope of a man when he realises that he has actually been under satanic dominion. So long as he looks upon his life as being blemished here and there it is possible that he may have most inadequate ideas of the mission of Jesus Christ, but when he realises that he has actually been the habitation of the very devil, he may be led to cry out for the deliverance which the gospel has come to effect. The realisation on the part of the minister that he has to counteract and destroy the devil will stimulate him to use his utmost endeavours to make full proof of his ministry. He has not only to cope with wrong notions, but with a diabolic personality; and if this conviction thoroughly possess him he will of necessity cultivate ever deepening fellowship with Jesus Christ, who alone has the power to break up the kingdom of Satan.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and said unto him, I will; be thou clean.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straightly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing

those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

In the 27th verse we found men putting questions regarding Jesus Christ's power; in the 40th verse we find a poor sufferer seeking to avail himself of Jesus Christ's curative energy. This marks the great difference between various classes of society in relation to the work of the Saviour. One class is content with looking, wondering, and perhaps admiring; another class must test his power in direct personal experience. Let it be distinctly pointed out that it is not sufficient to *wonder* at the ministry of Jesus Christ. In this chapter we have seen some who were brought to the Saviour; in the 40th verse we find a man who *came* to Jesus. Point out the blessedness of those who have others to conduct them to Jesus Christ; also point out the opportunity which each man has of making his own case known to Jesus Christ. This incident shows the *trust* which the ministry of the Saviour had inspired in the minds of sufferers, specially so in the case of the leper; the leper lived under the most terrible restrictions, yet his heart rose to the point of trust and love when he heard of the wonderful works of this new Man. Others would have turned him away, or would have run eagerly beyond his reach, but Jesus Christ the undefiled and undefiling man, received him, touched him and recovered him of his leprosy. Regarding this incident as illustrative of the method of spiritual salvation, it should be distinctly shown that the leper put himself unreservedly without any suggestion or wishes of his own into the hands of the Healer. He did not wish to be a party to the active work of healing himself; he was content to be passive, to wait his Lord's will. It should also be shown that Jesus Christ instantly gave practical expression to his own deep pity and mercy; he delights in immediately answering prayer; when we appeal to His justice, His righteousness, His sovereignty, we may be held a long time waiting that we may know more fully what is meant by these high terms; but when we come in weakness and poverty crying to His *compassion* His heart instantly moves towards us. The humble desire of suffering soon moves the heart of Jesus Christ. The third point that may be dwelt upon is the completeness of Christ's cure; immediately the leprosy departed from the man and he was cleansed. Is our Christian state one of complete pardon and hope? It is not asked whether it is one of complete sanctification, that is a progressive work; but the work of pardon will bring with it an instantaneous assurance that the burden of guilt has been removed. The impossibility of silence under the influence of great blessing is here most vividly illustrated. The joy of thankfulness cannot always be controlled. Christians must speak. The explanation of a true ministry is found in this incident. When we have received the highest blessings from the hands of Christ we feel an unchangeable desire to tell others of the great results of our having met the Saviour. The 45th verse shows how much can be done by *the energy of one man.* So much did the recovered leper publish his restoration that Jesus Christ could no more openly enter into the city

by reason of the multitude that thronged upon him, and by reason of the sensation which so great a miracle had created. Is there not in this incident an illustration of what we may do by being faithful to our convictions and impulses regarding the Son of God? Have we been healed without publishing the fact? Have we mentioned the fact of our conversion even to our dearest friend? Learn from the leper the possibility of so exciting a whole neighbourhood about personal recovery as to extend the name and bring blessings upon the gracious power of Jesus Christ.

The 44th verse may be used for the purpose of showing how Jesus Christ brings men into the established laws and relations of His own government, even under circumstances which might seem to justify an exception to the usual course of things. In our highest moments of inspiration and delight we ought to be controlled by law. Even our ecstacy should be regulated where it might endanger the constancy and faithfulness of our life. Jesus Christ never dissociates the ministry from the preceding dispensations; he always heightens and consummates, he never destroys except by fulfilment, as the fruit destroys the blossom. The whole chapter might be used for the purpose of showing *how possible it is for our christian life to be sublime from the very beginning.* This is the very first chapter in the gospel of Jesus Christ, yet it is full of light; it might have been the last chapter, so crowded is it with incidents and good works. There are christian people who are afraid of doing too much at the beginning; such people cannot have entered very deeply into the spirit of their Lord's enthusiasm and self sacrifice. Youthful christians should be encouraged to work from the very moment of the beginning of their new life. The earnest man does not care about the artistic graduation of his services, he does not even consider such a possibility; instantly that Jesus Christ takes possession of his heart his whole life becomes consecrated to the service of true doctrine and practical philanthropy. This chapter gives a most terrible rebuke to the notion that men should come only *gradually* into high christian engagements; no renewed heart can too soon begin to do the good works and bear the blessed fruits of christian regeneration. On the other hand, it should be pointed out for the encouragement of such as have few opportunities for the development of christian vocation, that they will be judged not by the more public services which their brethren may render, but by the position in life which they have been called providentally to occupy.

CHAPTER II.

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was ..oised that he was in the house.

The importance of having the names of towns and other places associated with religious services. Capernaum was thus associated with the name of Christ. Show what it is to have bad associations with places, how tormenting to the memory and how enfeebling in the matter of enterprise.

2 And straightway many were gathered, in so much that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them,

The gospel has a word to crowds as well as individual men. The gospel is universal in its doctrines, and hence can be preached to all classes at all times and in all places. It is also particular in its application of truth, so that it can be addressed to any single human being. When Jesus Christ saw crowds, his business was to preach the word to them. Christians should endeavour to get Jesus Christ's view of crowds of men. To the christian heart a crowd is a most exciting scene. The histories, the passions, the purposes, the designs of a great crowd, who can tell but God! Yet the Gospel is adapted to all.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and take up thy bed and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

(1) The helplessness of some men: all helplessness traceable to sin (2) The social usefulness of other men; we can all carry sufferers to Christ, even when we cannot heal them ourselves. To point a sinner to Jesus Christ is a good work, to carry a little child to the Saviour is to execute a most blessed mission. (3) The possibilities of earnestness; these men uncovered the roof in their determination to approach the Healer. Some would have gone away saying they would return on a more favourable occasion; some would have given up the endeavour altogether; these earnest men had an object in view, and were resolved on its accomplishment. All men can get to the Saviour if they so determine, however many be the apparent or real difficulties in their way. (4) The vigilance of Jesus Christ over human action. Notwithstanding the crowds and his engagement in addressing them, Jesus Christ saw what was being done in this particular instance; he knew the meaning of the extraordinary movement that was taking place, and the reward which he gave to the earnest men was great. (5) The censorious spirits of technical observers. The scribes accused the Saviour of blasphemy; they could not *understand* his inspiration, and it is always a misfortune to be misunderstood. Whoever determines to live the highest life, determines also to expose himself to the heavy penalties of misinterpretation. Jesus Christ did not deny their inference regarding his claim to the Godhead; he did not instantly disclaim any pretence to be as God, on the contrary, he so asserted his power as to justify the astounding inference of the scribes. Particular notice should be taken of this as an incidental proof of Jesus Christ's Godhead. To have allowed even tacitly the rightness of such inferences as were forced upon the scribes was, apart from his divinity, nothing short of a blasphemous assertion on his part. Jesus Christ works in much the same manner in relation *to spiritual*

diseases. We can get no higher than Himself; He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, and He gives according to His sovereign will in response to human faith. The fulness of Jesus Christ's power is shown in the perfect ease with which he works his miracles. He speaks the recreating word, and yet there is within Him no sign of exhaustion or insufficiency. Sinners should learn from this incident not to be discouraged because there are technical reasoners in their way who are fertile in the suggestion of objections: those who bore the sick of the palsy on this occassion did not listen to the reasonings or the objections of those by whom they were surrounded. If any man in going to Jesus Christ can be detained in the way to listen to the criticisms and counsels of those who are opposed to Christ, the probability is that he will never reach the Saviour. It is true that in this instance the scribes were reasoning in their hearts, and not openly so that they could be heard by a crowd; it is also true in our own day that many reason aloud against the possibility of Jesus Christ's saving sinners, those therefore who are conscious of sin ought to be put on their guard against subtle and persistent objectors. Had the man been unconscious of a deep and distressing want, he and his friends might have listened to captious reasoning; but his necessity was so urgent that nothing less than a personal interview with Christ would satisfy him. It is the same with the deadlier palsy of sin. If it be not to us the most terrible reality in our nature—if we do not so comprehend its horribleness as to loathe it unutterably—if we do not feel the moral agony which it inflicts until we cry out almost in despair, "What shall we do to be saved"—it is almost certain that we shall be turned aside by frivolous critics. The first thing to be done is to feel bitterly and inexpressibly the infinite abomination of sin. No progress in our approach to Jesus Christ can be made until we have come into this experience of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. In proportion as a man's estimate of sin is low will he be indisposed to find Jesus Christ; when his sin fills his heart with sorrow and despair, he will be resolved to surmount all obstacles that would interrupt his course towards the Saviour. The great result of the cure wrought upon the palsied man will be repeated on a broader scale in the consummation of Jesus Christ's ministry. It is said that "The people were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." So shall it be in the end of all things, there will be one universal ascription of glory to Him who has redeemed the human race from sin and given it eternal life. Here is contention at the beginning; men see things only in shadow and outline; whilst the process is going on they are victimized by their own impatience and oftentimes interrupt the Saviour and shew their utter want of self-control; but when the whole work is finished there will be throughout the universe a sense of thankful and glad amazement.

13 And he went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto them and he taught them.

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

The Saviour was not content with an occasional great effort, as we are apt to be. He is now found teaching the multitudes. Here is an

illustration of the two-fold ministry of Jesus Christ, namely, doing good to the bodies and also to the minds of men. We are left to infer what is meant by this word *taught*. It is clear from the whole course of Jesus Christ, *that he regarded all men as requiring teaching;* and it is also clear that he set himself forth as the Teacher who alone could reveal the highest truths of the universe. The christian minister is to be emphatically a teacher; he can only teach truly and successfully as he repeats the lessons which he finds in the life of the Saviour. Teaching is more difficult than preaching. In teaching there must be inquiry into the special circumstances of the learners, and an encountering of the particular difficulties of those who come to be taught; the preacher has to a large extent to deal with general truths, he has to make bold universal proclamations; whereas the teacher may have to go into special adaptation of the divine truth to the distinctive circumstances of the individual case. The teacher requires to be not only thoroughly intelligent and intensely devoted to his work, but to be long-suffering in his spirit and method of service. Men cannot be taught truth offhandedly; their prejudices must be studied, their capacities must be considered, and there must be such skilful balance in the offering of truth as shall meet different degrees of culture and sensibility. In the 14th verse we turn once more to the *individual* case. In the 13th verse we have a multitude receiving instruction; in the 14th verse we have *one man* specially called. This is the way christian ministers and teachers must work; we cannot all be like our Master having equal facility in addressing crowds and persuading individual hearers: some men have a gift of speaking so as to hold great multitudes under their dominion; others again have a most useful talent in speaking to the individual life and conscience. Levi was called from the receipt of custom; the great point is to consider not what a man is called *from*, but what he is called to. We are all called from sin; we look not so much to that as to the infinite glory which is set before us as the outcome of Christian faith and love and service. The 14th verse might be used as shewing what can be done in the way of *incidental work for Christ;* we learn that Jesus Christ "passed by," as if this circumstance occurred quite casually and not in the working out of a set purpose. It does not seem to have been part of the plan, yet undoubtedly it was so in the mind of Christ to whom nothing could happen by chance. There is however a lesson to us, that we are to be always on the outlook for the good of men whom we are passing by in the various ways of life. Wherever we see a man we see an opportunity of speaking a word for Christ, and of calling men to a higher life. Courage and prudence are equally required in the discharge of these incidental services. There is a modesty that is immodest, and there is a forwardness which is but the courage of humility.

15 And it came to pass that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many and they followed him.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

These verses show that Jesus Christ lived under a constant fire of criticism. This was not unnatural. If we have escaped criticism it may be because we have escaped christianity.

The City Temple.

SELF-GOVERNED CHURCHES.

UNLESS there be intense spiritual life in self-governed churches, there will be anarchy, clamour, debate, and mutual distrust. We are growingly of opinion that all self-contained and self-ruling churches afford great scope for the play of the worst passions of half-christianised nature. Little men are invested with great power. The hand of a clodhopper counts as much as the hand of a philosopher. Church squabbling is the only recreation which some persons allow themselves. The shopkeeper primes himself with arguments against the minister; the most impertinent member of the mutual improvement society turns over in his "mind" the best way of assailing his pastor; the purse-proud upstart, whose grandfather never wore a pair of boots, determines to "have it out at the next church-meeting;" and various other seat-holders plot a little ecclesiastical mischief in their several ways. On all these points we can unhappily bring only too much evidence in proof. On the other hand, it is most happily true that in many churches there is a strong combination of order and liberty; pastors are beloved and honoured; members hold each other in cordial esteem. We wish to be most explicit upon this point. Far be it from us to indulge in unmodified condemnation. Instance upon instance might be accumulated in which pastors and churches live together in thorough christian harmony, yielding without reluctance to the duty of mutual concession, each finding in the other the complement without which both would be incomplete and weak. Such instances, however, throw into painful contrast the cases in which christian privilege is degraded into licentiousness. There is an aspect of Congregationalism which has been made revolting by oft-repeated

and most vicious abuse of membership and office. We know ministers whose life is little better than genteel slavery. They are poor—they have large families dependent upon them—and by so much they cannot afford to resent criticisms and interferences of the vulgarest and coarsest kind. One man will ask how it is that so few additions are made to the church? Another will inquire how it is that the collections have fallen off? A third will profess to lament that the seats were better let in former years. A fifth will intimate that "we must have preaching which is abreast of the times." The minister often listens to these things with a justly angry spirit, oftener still with a heavy or aching heart,—but what can he do? Shall he answer a fool according to his folly? That is exactly what the fool would like above everything. Shall he restrain himself, and swallow his grief in secret? He does so, but such discipline often brings with it discouragement and sadness,—sometimes almost despair. Under such circumstances no man can work heartily; his very life is diminished; his hope, his inspiration, is withdrawn from him. Then, there is negative opposition as well as active. The tenant of the first pew simply hangs down his head when the minister is preaching—nothing more! The tenant of the second pew always absents himself when the minister specially requests the presence of every seat-holder. The tenants of pews number eight, eleven, and fourteen always give most money to charity collections when the sermons are preached by any other minister than their own. And these lovely characters never *say* anything harsh, and never move hostile resolutions! Are we, in view of such blemishes, to be told that, after all, it is only a bit of human nature? The suggestion is not an explanation. The magistrate does not say to the felon that he has given way to human nature; the judge does not find in human nature an excuse for the murderer. Are we to be told, then, that when a man does not take your spoons but only steals your good name, does not kill the body but only thrusts a poisoned weapon through your affections, that he is to be excused on the ground that, after all, it is only a bit of human nature? There is but one remedy for such a state of things: that one remedy—divine, sovereign, unfailing—is, *closer communion with Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost.*

In the hope of showing the catholicity of our Thursday Service, we applied to a most distinguished and influential clergyman of the Church of England to preside at the preliminary prayer meeting. We withhold his universally honoured name, but we think that his fraternal words

ought to be known to all our readers: they have greatly cheered us in our work. His reply is as follows:—"I am deeply touched by your kind wish and request. If I say No to it, you will believe that it is in no unkind or unbrotherly spirit, when I tell you that I have myself, with a very dear friend, been one of your congregation at the Thursday Midday Service in Cheapside, and was immensely struck by the scene and by the sermon. . . . . Most truly and cordially yours." Such a note as this enables one to get over a good deal of discouragement.

It is proposed that every meeting of the London School Board be opened with prayer. The matter stands over for settlement, but, so far as we can gather from the discussion which has already taken place, there is small chance for the success of the motion. It must be borne in mind that the Board is not pronouncing any opinion upon the doctrine or practice of prayer: it is simply considering whether, having regard to the peculiarities of its own constitution, it is advisable to hide its religious disunion under a solemn act which would be little better than enforced simulation in some cases. The practical difficulties which beset the proposition are by no means inconsiderable. Who is to *compose* the prayer—a Churchman, a Dissenter, or a Papist? Who is to *offer* the prayer—a paid chaplain, a clergyman, an Independent, a Wesleyan, a Baptist, or a Romish priest? Is it to be a written prayer, according to the method of the Established Church? or an extempore prayer, according to the practice of Nonconformists? These questions would not be found easy of settlement in such an assembly as the London School Board. It is plain to us that if there is to be any religious service in connection with the meetings of the Board, the utmost that can be done is to have either the Lord's Prayer or a portion of Holy Scripture read by the Chairman or the Clerk. In our opinion, however, the motion should be withdrawn.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, January 26, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-FOURTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

ALMIGHTY God, in Thee we live and move and have our being. Everywhere hast thou set up witnesses of thy power and thy goodness. Thou hast made all life, but thou hast also redeemed the life of man. Enable us to know the price of our redemption, and to glorify God in our body and in our spirits, which have been ransomed at so great cost. Watch us, and our security shall be complete. Be near us, and no arm shall do us injury. Stablish us, and our foundation shall be immovable. Put within us thy Holy Spirit, and we shall not sin against thee. Jesus Christ, blessed and only Son of God, show us all the tender glory of thy salvation. Let thy light, which is above the brightness of the sun, shine upon our vision, and we shall rejoice as men who have seen a marvellous light. Let our waiting before thee be the means of recovering our strength. Oh, Thou who hearest prayer! incline thine ear unto the voice of our supplication; and through Jesus Christ, our blessed and only Saviour, let Thy peace rest upon us. Amen.

LITTLE BUT WISE.

"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."—PROVERBS, XXX., 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

THESE words distinctly teach that wisdom is not measurable by physical magnitude. The large man may be a little man. The little body may shelter a great soul. The elephantine and prodigious body may hardly have a soul at all. These things are perfectly well known to every one of us, yet we require to be reminded of them with some frequency, because so many appeals are addressed to our senses. We are called upon to admire mere bigness, bulk, surface, and weight. The same terms do not always mean the same thing. Sometimes little is not

merely little. Sometimes greatness is greatness *minus*. Some pounds have sixteen ounces in them, other pounds have only twelve. Butchers and silversmiths do not reckon by the same arithmetical tables. In a prosperous condition of society, a single diamond may be worth more money than all the beasts in a cattle market; but in times of famine one lamb will be more precious than all the diamonds in kings' houses. Value varies according to circumstances. He is the wise man who knows the one thing whose value never changes, which over-balances and reduces to insignificance the pomp of unintelligent creation. If we lay hold of these things and estimate values correctly, it will help in the adjustment of social relations and in the appreciation of those virtues which ought ever to be uppermost in a true condition of society. We are called upon to remember that wisdom, and wisdom alone, is the true standard of measurement; that the humblest life is greater than the sublimest art, and that one spark of intellect is infinitely more precious than the most crushing animal strength.

> "Were I so tall to reach the pole,
> Or grasp the ocean in my span,
> I must be measured by my soul—
> The mind's the standard of the man."

The lesson of the morning is that it is possible to be little and yet to be exceeding wise. Let us gather round these little wise creatures and learn what we may from them. "Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the heavens and they shall tell thee." He makes a wise use of nature who regards it as a book of divine instruction. Everything has its lesson. Everywhere I find the signature, the autograph of God, and he will never deny his own handwriting. God hath set his tabernacle in the dewdrop as surely as in the sun. No man can any more create the meanest polyp than he could create the greatest world. We are surrounded by instructors; we are in a great school-house; it is full of letters, lessons, illustrations and appeals. If, then, we be found fools after all, how bitter, how terrible must be our condemnation! Blame not the savage in the lonely forest for his ignorance of letters; but the man who has had every opportunity of attaining scholarship, and after all remains in ignorance, rightly deserves the concentrated bitterness of human contempt. But beware of setting up precedents and inaugurating analogies and instituting seats of judgment; because God will gather them all altogether one day, and his great white throne will be the more terrible for the precedents we ourselves have perpetrated.

"The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." This is forecast. Some people seem to have no forecast; they are never quite sure how many two and two will make. They seem to have no power of turning the past into the prophet of the future. They bury the past, and act upon this advice, "let the dead past bury its dead." But there is a past that is not dead, and we must not impose upon that living, instructive, interpretative prophetic past the duty of burying itself. Yesterday is the key which opens to-morrow, so far as great principles and fundamental conditions of life and service are concerned. The ants gather their meat in the summer; that is, they know

the time of their opportunity, and they make the best of it. We ourselves have a little proverb, which may match the text. How is it your proverb runs, my friend? "Make hay while the sun shines." And there is another like unto it: quote it, if you please. "Strike the iron while it is hot." What if you geniuses in hay, and philosophers in iron, be found at last to be fools in the soul, lunatics and madmen about your standing with God! "If the light that is in us be darkness how great is that darkness."

Every man has a summer. It is quite true, indeed, that some summers are very short; yet, it must be repeated, least any man should run away with the notion that he has no opportunity of being and doing good—that every man has a summer; only one summer. Man has but one boyhood, as the day has but one dawn. Life hath but one summer, as hath the rolling year. Yet, to some men, an hour has more than sixty minutes in it, and to other men all the clocks in Christendom could never teach the value of time. There are men who never have time to do anything,—they are always going to think about how this thing or that might be approached and come round upon and looked at; and whilst they are engaged in this serene and philosophical exercise, the whole thing passes on beyond their reach, beyond their influence. There is one thing for which men ought to find time, and that is to prepare for the future. Do you say you have not time? How then are you spending your time? In business, in strife after position, trying to get daily bread honestly. Well, all this up to a given point is perfectly right, perfectly defensible. But see! You had better set fire to your shop,—you had better go without bread,—you had better hide your nakedness in some distant retreat where man could never find you,—than lose the opportunity of knowing spiritual and rectifying spiritual relations, of knowing God, laying hold upon him and following hard after him. The life is more than meat. If anything is to be saved out of the fire, it is not the decoration, the luxury, the toy,—it is the child! The life first, and then if you can get anything afterwards by all means get it; but do in the name of your own common sense be as reasonable and as sensible in spiritual things as you are in things that are temporal. Summer is quickly going with some of you yet learn, that if one moment remains a great deal may be done in it. It is marvellous how the very greatest things we read of have been done, as it were, instantaneously. It is wonderful what creative force there is in one word, what determining might there is in one resolution, how in one moment a man may change the current of his life and the point of his destiny. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." It is a point of time,—it is one effort of the heart,—it is one gasp of the soul, and then—What? Eternity! Heaven! There may have been long processes, but the climateric deed is often expressed by a word. Some of you have had time enough to get to the height of your aspirations, to get through your processes of thinking and considering and calculating. And hear me! If you have had this time and have abused it, from this moment your life is not an ascension, it is an anti-climax.

"The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rock." The tenant is weak, the habitation is strong. Here is a puny, a very feeble folk, going up towards the great rock-house. Why, there is something very pathetic, very beautiful in that—in weakness seeking the granite, in feebleness hiding itself in some pavilion of rock. There is a law of compensation. In the universe there is a law of what I may term complement, a law which makes up to men, somehow, the thing that is wanting. Man must always look out of himself for this complemental quantity. God provides the rock for the conies, and God provides a rock for all weakness. What if the conies should attempt to say, "We are a feeble folk, but we are just as God has made us; so we shall stop out here in summer and in winter. We shall take things just as they fall out; we didn't make ourselves, and therefore we have no reason to look after anything." "Why," you would say, "the conies are a very feeble folk indeed,—feeble in their intellect, feeble in their common sense, as well as feeble in their physical faculties." A man may say, "I am not equal to this or that; I am insufficient; there are points when I feel myself utterly unequal to the task that is before me. I cannot reach my ideals; my prayers outstrip me; I can't follow after them, except at immense distances. Life is too much for me; the great overbearing forces of life are too much for me,—I must succumb." Is there any provision made for this state of things by the Great Creator, the merciful Redeemer, and the gentle Father of mankind? There is a Rock provided for all weakness.

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee"—

is the only rock in which all man's weaknesses can be hidden. That is the only power by which a man's feebleness can be defended. It is indeed a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. But we are distinctly told that it is laid in Zion by God himself, and that it is elect, tried, precious and sure. "There is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." Those of us who have known this a long while, will make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. We will say, "the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my sure abiding place." Has any man entered this house in a spirit of complaint? Then, I have to teach that man that every one of us has a compensation. If you have not one thing you have another. You have no money, but you have good health. Your circumstances are very gloomy; yes, but you have a most hopeful disposition. You are sleepless by reason of adversity; true, but you have the hearing ear which hears the nightingale when miles away. You have no estates; no,—but you have the poetic eye, which gives you proprietorship in all the sunny landscape. You have no acquaintances; no,—but you find fellowship in a thousand noble thoughts. You are blind; yes,—but there is sunshine on your soul. You have no hands; true,—but you can write and paint with your feet. So, I never met a man anywhere who was in a grumbling, censorious, reproachful temper, but that I could find in that man some compensation, I could point out in him some little bright spot that he had overlooked. Everywhere I find the seal of God's goodness,—the

stamp of his tender and enduring mercy. "Let everything that hath breath say, his mercy endureth for ever."

"The locusts have no king, yet they come forth all of them by bands"—a very beautiful and practical republic. They have no king, but every one of them has a little bit of kingliness in himself. You cannot have a grand republic without kingliness, and you cannot have a great state if you only have a king in it. Here I find combination—not lonely wandering, solitary flying, every one studying to do a little for himself; I find co-operation—going together, moving in bands. I saw a chain the other day in one of the public parks. I followed it as it lay upon the grass, and I found it was tethering an animal some twenty yards off. I said to myself, Which of the links holds that cow? Not the first link, nor the second, nor the third, nor the fortieth nor fiftieth. Which link is really holding that cow? Not one of the links, but all the links on the chain are doing so. And what is the chain? Only a series of links, and so links and chain, chain and links, are all doing the work. That is how it must be in business, in families, in churches, in governments, in all great confederacies of life.

Here is a most copious and gracious shower for the refreshing of the parched earth: the flowers are drinking in the blessing, and the earth is looking young again. What did it? Catch one of the drops, and say, Are you doing this? No. Which drop did it? No drop did it—the shower did it! So it must be in our great christian agencies. There is no one man can do it all. God hath not appointed men so to do. He hath called us to unity, to co-operation, to banding ourselves together, to finding in each other the complement of ourselves. Every man has a sphere. Though we may have a republic, it won't mean that one is as good as another. One man is not as good as another, and one man is not as much of a man as another: he may require a larger coat, but a very small accommodation will do for his soul. It may be so, or it may not be so; and if we were all equal this moment, before the clock went round once we should all be sixes and sevens—and mainly I am afraid sixes.

There are, after all, men who cannot go in bands—men who must be complete in themselves, so far as action is concerned. Though there are some (what shall I say roughly?) hundred denominations in christendom, and there wants a hundred and *first* just to meet some peculiar man, some odd man, who has been looking out for a church where he can sit down, and has not yet met a church with which he can unite himself. Well, well! Let him be a church by himself. He is a crooked rail, perhaps one day we may turn a corner with him.

The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' houses. Does this mean skill? This skill will have its reward. Does it mean patience in working out elaborate and beautiful results. Then here is progress—getting into kings' houses, into high places, into palatial position. Every man is set upon an ascending line of human life. You never find God calling a man downwards, diminishing the volume of his manhood, checking his good aspirations, putting him down in the scale of his being. All the divine movement is an upward movement. We are not always to be children, we are to be men.

We are not to be content with the point of conversion, we are to grow in grace. We are not to be satisfied with being branches in the vine, we are to bring forth much fruit. We are not to see how little we can do, we are to be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Here then is a test of growth and the standard of manhood. Here is a reward of industry and skill and patience. In all labour there is profit. You do not see all the results of your work, your patience, your attention to culture, to duty, to service. You don't know the rewards of your tranquil trust, your uncomplaining pain and suffering. There is profit in the thing itself; there is not always a marketable profit—something that can be set up and ticketted at a fair price. But there is in the soul, in the man himself, such growth and strength, such refinement, such tenderness, such majesty as nothing else could have wrought in him.

Now, my dear friends, the whole study becomes an argument. If God has given such wisdom to insects, how much more will he give to men? They can't ask for any more; we are urged to speak to him to give us further supplies. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not." What! will He make a wise insect, and forget the child fashioned in His own image—imperial, divine—after His own likeness? Then if we are not wise, whose blame is it? It is not God's blame. He waits to communicate, he loves to give. An ungiving God! That would be a monstrosity of paganism,—a degradation of mythology itself. We are called to asking, to prayer, to supplication, to pleading, that the volume of our being may be increased, that our spiritual graces may be multiplied, and that all that is divine in us may be enhanced and confirmed. No man can be wise without this union with God. He may have swallowed whole libraries—he may be a *helluo librorum*, but he is not wise. If God commends so distinctly the right use of instinct, how bitterly will he complain of the abuse of reason! Men are sent to the ants to learn diligence. They are sent to the conies to learn that there is a way which terminates in a great rock. They are sent to the locusts to learn how littles, when combined, may become mighty, sufficient for all the duty and obligation of the day. What if it be found at the last that all the lower orders and ranks of creation have been obedient, dutiful, loyal,—and that the child only has wounded the great heart? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." God has had no trouble with his creatures—no trouble with his great constellations—they never mutinied against him; he has had no trouble with his forests—no rebel host ever banded themselves there. Where has his sorrow lain? His own child, his beloved one, in whom he has written in fairest lines the perfectness of his own beauty, that child has lifted up his puny fist and smitten him, not in the face only, but on his heart of love, which only can be forgiven by the shedding of sacrificial blood. "The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." And oh, the madness, the insanity, which says,

"We are taking our own course because we believe in our own reason. We follow our own judgment; we are asserting the right of our own thinking." Fools, madmen! Who gave you any spark of reason you have? Is it your own? did you bargain for it, buy it? How was that little lamp lighted, by whose flickering spark you are trying to grope your way through the dark and perilous unknown? He who gave the insect instinct, power of thinking about its own little world and planning its own little day's work, gave you your reason; and it would be quite as reasonable, if it were at all possible, that the ants and the conies and the locusts and the spiders should call a conference and council to take each others' advice about working out their own independent judgment, as it is for men to think they can do without God and find their way without the light which is above the brightness of the sun. We are all guilty in this matter. We have all been too self-reliant, too self-boastful; we have all taken too much into our own hands. God be merciful unto us sinners! Amen.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER II.

Criticism will always be provoked by an intensely christian spirit. Men are apt to think that Jesus Christ took upon himself all criticism, and so relieved his followers from the remarks of those who are now opposed to them. This should be shown to be a deadly error. Those who criticised Jesus Christ were men of good outward standing, yet they were destitute of moral purity: such men are always most forward in giving opinions about the conduct of other people. Where there is high moral character there will be prolonged forbearance of other people's weaknesses, but where the outward habit is in excess of the inward principle there will be no lack of censorious criticism. In the case of Jesus Christ it is clearly shown that where there is moral purity there is noble independence of public opinion: Jesus went boldly into such houses as he elected as his temporary residences, he sat openly with publicans and sinners; and the reason of what in other men would have been defiant bravery was the intense and incorruptible purity of his own heart. Men can only brave public criticism surely and serenely in proportion as they are right. Righteousness is peace.

17 When Jesus heard it he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Jesus hears all the objections that are urged against him. He sees all the objections that are in the heart before they are formed into words. Of him it may be said, "Thou knowest my thought afar off." Jesus Christ does not look upon one opinion as secret

and another as public: to him the whole history of human life is an open page, on which the noonday sun is shining. Jesus Christ has an instant answer to all objections: witness the case in point. From this answer we may see—(1) Duty of doing good avowedly—not going about it in an indirect manner as if we were making an experiment, but boldly and distinctly, approaching it with a set purpose of spending our best energy upon it. (2) We may see it to be our duty to go to those who are *least cared for*. We are only working in the line of the Saviour's mission as we begin at the very *lowest* point in the social scale. We cannot do fundamental and permanent good by beginning at the top or in the middle; we must get down to springs and causes, we must begin at the very deepest point of human apostacy and work our way steadily upward; there is a temptation even in christian work to stop short of the lowest depth of human necessity. (3) Jesus Christ shows it to be our duty to *associate* with those whom we seek to save: he sat with them, he talked to them, he asked them questions, he made himself their personal friend, and so attained over them personal supremacy. This practice levels a deadly blow at the theory of doing good by proxy. It is comparatively easy to send other men on errands of mercy, but we are only working in Christ's spirit in so far as we are prepared to go ourselves and openly identify our whole influence with the cause of fallen men. Where there is this intense personal consecration there will, of course, be a disposition to engage as much co-operation as possible; our duty is to see that we do not find in co-operation an excuse for personal negligence. Jesus Christ answered his opponents almost invariably by laying down *a great principle*. He did not *trust* to uncommon reasonings or work according to the special mood of the day. He had intense personal conviction, to which he constantly referred in explanation and defence of his ministry. Ministers are only strong up to the degree in which they know precisely what they have come to do: Jesus Christ said he came for the express purpose of healing the sick and calling sinners to repentance. Unity in this as in all other things is strength. When a man works with divided heart his work ends in failure.

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

(1) There *should be* difference between Jesus Christ's disciples and the disciples of all other men. It is noticeable how soon those differences were detected by the critics of the day. The differences should be as broadly marked now as they were in the days of Jesus Christ's visible ministry. (2) Those differences should find their explanation in Jesus Christ, not in the expression of the disciples themselves. Jesus Christ takes upon himself the responsibility of determining the public attitude of his disciples. They

must be joyful or sad according to the spirit which he puts into them or the temporary discipline to which he subjects them. There is a time when it is right for the disciples to be glad and triumphant, joyful as men who are at a wedding feast in the presence of the bridegroom; there is also a time in which they must just bow down their heads in pensiveness and sad wonder about the future. The difficulty in many cases is for the heart to realize that alike in joy and in sorrow, it may be working out the beneficent purposes of the Saviour. (3) The illustration about pieces of cloth and the different wines shows the perfect uniqueness of christianity: there is to be no patching, there is to be no compromising, christianity is to have a distinctiveness and speciality of its own: the ancient make and the modern variation are not to be put together as part and parcel of christian truth, christianity is to stand out alone complete in its indivisible and perfect unity. In this case again we see how Jesus Christ throws himself back upon great principles, and finds in the simplicity of nature and the integrity of truth the surest defence of his church.

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day, and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Jesus is still living under the fire of criticism already referred to. In this particular interview it is made clear—(1) That all critical inquiries are not to be condemned. This question on the part of the Pharisees was not at all unnatural. Men ought to be called upon to give explanations of habits that are opposed to the public sentiment and usages of their times. Jesus Christ does not resent the inquiry as if it proceeded from a wicked spirit. Let it be inferred from this that there are right questions to be put concerning the christian religion and the practice of christians. There are questions that are bad in their spirit and bad in their purposes, there are also questions which come quite naturally out of the extraordinary development of christian conviction and impulse. Jesus Christ shows by his answers that he considered human life to be above all technical law. The disciples were an hungered as they passed through the corn fields. David was an hungered when he ate the shewbred; there are courses in human life when men are apparently or really lifted above the current of law and usage, and when life becomes to itself a determining law. (2) The perfect and inalienable supremacy of Jesus Christ is asserted in the last verse. He proclaims himself Lord over *time*, over *institutions and over human affairs*. This great claim is not to be overlooked in estimating the dignity of Jesus Christ's personal ministry. Could any mere man have proclaimed his lordship over the Sabbath day? a man can not be Lord of the Sabbath without being Lord of something beyond. God does not distribute these lordships, the Lord of the Sabbath is also the Lord of Hosts.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 2, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-FIFTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

MERCIFUL ONE, we hasten to shelter ourselves in the sanctuary of Thy love. In the pavilion of God we shall find defence and rest. We live upon mercy. We depend upon compassion. Thy mercies are new every morning, and as for Thy compassions they never fail. To-day may we know more than ever the sweetness of Thy mercy. Help us to see its beauteous threads in all the web of our lives, and specially help us to see its amazing sublimity in the Cross of Thy dear Son. God be merciful unto us and bless us! God be merciful unto us sinners! Whilst we meditate upon Thy mercies may our hearts burn within us, and may all our best vows be repeated. Our sins are many, yet in the sea of Thy love as revealed in Jesus Christ, they may be swallowed up, never more to be found. Behold us at the Cross,—see our trust in the dying Priest who in the fulness of his love became the bleeding Sacrifice, and when Thou seest Lord forgive! Unto the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, in whose threefold name our poor names were pronounced in baptism, be the kingdom, the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

PROFITABLE DISCIPLINE.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."—LAMENTATIONS, III., 22, 23.

THOUGH I have read these words specifically as the text, yet my purpose includes a reference to the verses with which the chapter opens. Taking the opening of the chapter, along with the portion which has just been read, we seem to find a good deal of inconsistency, and in fact positive contradiction. Spiritual

experience must be looked at as a whole. It is not right to fix attention either upon this side or upon that, to the exclusion and the forgetfulness of the other. One side is very dark and full of sadness, sharply inclined towards despair; the other is brighter than the summer morning, tuneful, sunned with all the lustre of saintly hope: so we must take the night with the morning, if we would have the complete day. Jeremiah had rare power in sounding the depths of disciplinary sorrow. He walked familiarly through the chambers of dark dispensations: life was often to Jeremiah little better than a thunder-gloom: hence he often had to find his way by fitful gleams of lightning rather than by the clear and steady shining of the sun. It does us good now and then to talk to such a man. The soul cannot always live in laughter; the man who has seen much sorrow, and turned it to a right use, will help us more in all that is deepest and truest in our nature than the man who has always lived mirthfully, and who does not know what it is to have sorrow, a black and exacting guest, tenanting and tormenting his soul. He is not a man who has never had a trial or a sorrow. He knows little who has not received a great deal of his learning through the dimness of his tears. We do not read the deepest of God's words, and the tenderest of his messages, when there is no cloud in the sky, when the morning is bright and blue and lustrous, and there is no intercepting cloud. God often lowers his voice to a whisper when the heart-broken feel that the clouds are very many and the way crooked and extremely perilous. When Jeremiah does laugh his joy will be rich and full; when he does sing he will fill heaven and earth with his resounding joy. No man can be truly joyful who has not been deeply, heart-brokenly sorrowful. It should be pointed out that depression is not an exclusively religious state. It might be supposed from a great deal that one hears, that not until we become religious do we become depressed; not until we love and follow God do we know what is meant by heart-sinking and stealthy walking in perilous places. This is a mistake from beginning to end. You may find depression in all the conditions of life that are healthy. Sometimes the painter cannot paint with his soul; his hand has lost its cunning, because his spirit has lost the key of mystery and has no vision of the invisible. Sometimes the poet cannot sing; he cannot read the parable of nature, nor construe the language of the fretted shadows, nor detain the sweet spirit which baptises the dreaming soul at the fount of God. To painter and poet the world often becomes dark at noontide; beauty retires and music ceases, when painter and poet would give half their living to retain those twin angels in their heart's confidence. The fact is, that religious spirits are most depressed simply because they are most exalted. Where you find the highest mountains you find the deepest valleys. In proportion to the range and spirituality of the world in which a man lives will be the pensiveness and gloom of his occasional hours. If the poet droops when his harp does not respond to his touch, how must the soul faint when God hides himself? If the timid child moans because his chamber light has gone out, with what bitterness of complaint should we speak if the sun were extinguished? If men say they are never depressed, that they are always in high spirits, it is probably because they never were really in

high spirits at all—not knowing the difference between the soul's rapture, mental and spiritual ecstasy, and merely animal excitement. What can the barn-door fowl know of the experiences of a disabled eagle? The man who is breaking stones on the highway may never be depressed, but his elder stone-breaking brother, who moulds marble into angels, may often sigh for a clearer light and a daintier touch. So everything depends upon the world we live in; and depend upon it, there is something wrong with a man somewhere if he be always in the same high key. No year that God ever made was made from beginning to end of July.

This is a very wonderful strain of talk on the part of the lamenting Jeremiah. I have gathered together lines out of his third chapter, and put them into couplets; and you will see what very startling and pathetic contrasts may be made out of his complaint. Let us hear Jeremiah:—

> "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath;
> It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.
>
> He turneth his hand against me all the day:
> His compassions are new every morning.
>
> When I cry and shout he shutteth out my prayer;
> The Lord is good unto the soul that seeketh him.
>
> He hath pulled me in pieces; He hath made me desolate;
> He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

These are the contradictory experiences of the same soul. Such are the night and morning of a man's spirit in its relations to Almighty God! Here is a man who is saying that God is turned against him all the day. Then we say we shall have nothing to do with a God so exacting and so terrible as that; and he detains us, recalls us, ere yet we have moved away from him by saying, "His mercies, compassions are new every morning." So you must never break off at a semicolon. You might read lines in this chapter and say, "God hath treated Jeremiah with great unfatherliness." But let him finish his sentences, sphere off his utterance, and when he has done so, you may judge of his speech as a whole. "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath; his compassions fail not."

Here are two men having a little talk about a district of country through which they have passed. One of the men's speech is this, "It is a poor, desolate, barren land; I never wish to go through that district of country again, it is so featureless, wanting undulation and variety, and that brokenness of line which delights an artistic eye, defective in colouring too,—it is altogether a poor wretched piece of country. I don't care ever to retrace my steps over it." The other man's speech is this, "I don't know a piece of lovelier country anywhere, the undulation is so easy, the lines are so beautifully broken up, there is such pleasing variety, you have all the features that can enter into a piece of beautiful landscape on a small scale,—not to be romantic, I don't know any lovelier part of English scenery." "Why!" you say, "the fact is that both these statements can't be true,—either the one man or the other is mistaken: they contradict each other flatly, and therefore both their statements can't be

true." A third man puts this question, "When did you go through that district?" "Why, sir," the first man says, "I went through it in November, one of the foggiest, murkiest days that I ever found in the English climate." "When did you go through the district?" is the enquiry put to the second man; and he says, "I went through it about Midsummer, and a lovelier day I think never shone upon the island." Now we begin to see a little, at least, as to how the discrepancy came. A great deal depends upon atmosphere. The mountains are there in the night-time, but you can't see them. The rich, verdant flowery meads are there at midnight, but you can't light up the landscape with your little candle. You must have the medium as well as the object. A great deal depends upon the clearness of the atmosphere as to whether we appreciate this object or that in natural scenery. So it is with souls. A good many of us seem to have long winters, short days, poor artificial light, murky, gloomy dispiriting weather, cruel fogs. like this we have to-day. Others of us have more sunshine, more summer weather in the soul. But what we want to understand is this:—That religion, right relations with God, a true standing before the Almighty, does not depend upon this feeling or upon that; it is not a question of climate, atmosphere, air, spirits: it is a question of fact. The question is not, How do you feel to-day? But, Where are you standing? are you on the rock? The rock won't change; the climate will. Be right in your foundation, and the season of rejoicing will come round again. But so many people are occupied with the question of mere experience of feeling, that they are apt to forget that the primary question, the vital question, is, the soul's relation to God at the foot of the Cross. Where there is an established standing upon the Rock of Ages, the foundation laid in Zion, there will be carefulness of judgment, patience of waiting, in relation to all climatic annoyances and all the atmospheric variations of the soul's feeling. He who is right in his principles will come right in his feelings. He who lays hold of God by the truth that is in Christ Jesus will patiently, quietly and successfully wait for the incoming of the dazzling glory of the sun. And yet I wish to speak with discrimination, with judgment, perhaps with severity, but only with the severity of truth, about this question of depression and feeling. There is a depression which admits of explanation. Here is a man who in the time of trial succumbed; he spoke the coward's word when he ought to have been resolute. He was timid, not with modesty, but with cowardice. Here is a man who has been rolling iniquity under his tongue as a sweet morsel,—rolling that iniquity under his tongue in the very act of singing hymns and uttering the words of formal prayer. Here is a man who has some evil purpose in his heart, luxuriating over prospects on which God's disapprobation rests like an immovable frown. He has been planning forbidden enjoyment, scheming pleasures at the expense of conviction, conscience, righteousness, and christian standing, and he comes in here to-day in a depressed state of mind. Thank God! If that man could be as joyful as the pure little child-heart in Christ's kingdom, then God hath forgotten to be judge, and there is no righteousness in his law. The question therefore is, Can our depression be traced to moral causes?

Have I been keeping false weights and balances? Have I been clever at the expense of virtue and righteousness? Have I been untrue to my vows, faithless to my professions? Then I have no right to expect anything but depression, and if I were not depressed there would be something wrong in the moral government of the world. Yes, and a man may be depressed though he may be showing at the time great animal exultation; but there is a ring about honest excitement and true joy which is not to be mistaken by practised ears. Many a man seeks to drown his conscience and to dismiss his depression by overstrained religious excitement, and he can't do it. The ghost is there! He hangs up a veil before the spectre, and says, "Now it is gone, I shall be at ease." He takes up the veil. Behold! there it is—grim, grizzly, ghastly, with judgment written upon every lineament. And it is well that a man cannot dismiss these memories, these presences, that ought to be to him terrible as the light, awful as the judgment of God.

Now taking Jeremiah's experiences as a whole, what do we find that sanctified sorrow had wrought in him? In the first place it gave him a true view of divine government. Jeremiah was brought to understand two things about the government of God. He was brought to understand that God's government is tender. The word tenderness we do not very well connect with the word government. When we think of government, we think of something severe, stern, inflexible, unyielding, imperial, majestic, magnificent, dominating. Well, but that is only half a truth so far as the government of God is concerned. What words do you suppose Jeremiah connected with the government of God? Why these two beautiful words, each a piece of music, "Mercies," "Compassions." A man can only get into that view of government by living the deepest possible life. We are always jealous when we find sentiment entering into governmental relations and governmental decisions. But, here is God, Almighty God, and all tender, ruling with infinite majesty, stooping with more than motherly grace. God's government is not composed of huge unsympathetic, tearless strength. A God all strength would be a monster. A God throned on ivory, ruling the universe with a sceptre of mere power, could never establish himself in the confidence and love and trust of his creatures. We might fear him, but when we got together in some corner where his face was excluded for a moment, we should turn round upon him with many execrations! Man can't be ruled and governed by mere power, fear, overwhelming, dominating, crushing strength and force. So we find David saying, "Power belongeth unto God, unto thee also, O Lord, belongeth mercy." Power in the hands of mercy, omnipotence impregnated by all the tenderness of pity. "This is the God we adore, our faithful unchangeable friend." That preaching would be untrue, one-sided, misleading, which dwelt entirely upon the regal, majestic aspect of God. That is the true exposition of divine nature which opens up the fatherliness, motherliness, mercifulness and compassion of God's great heart.

This discipline wrought in Jeremiah the conviction that God's government was minute. Speaking of God's mercies he says, "they are

new every morning." Morning mercies,—daily bread. This is what we find in the Old Testament, and in the New; but the Old Testament saints seemed only to be able to get from one morning to another, just the clock once round, and then they wanted more. New every morning! A beautiful word in the Old Testament is that, and we get in the New Testament,—What? Daily bread, new every *week*, new every *year?* No. "Give us this day our daily bread." That is it. God shutting us up within a day and training us a moment at a time. The Psalmist said, "thy mercies have been ever of old." And another singer said, "thy mercies are new every morning." Is there no contradiction there? Ever of old—every morning! Time is old: every morning is new. Existence comprises a long, long succesion of years, but no year ever had an old May given to it, or an old June thrown into it. Thy mercies have been ever of old, and they have been new every morning. Old as duration, new as morning; old as human existence, new as the coming summer. These are all inconsistences that mark our life. Age and infirmity, the ancient of days, the child of Bethlehem; the root out of the dry ground, the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley; the despised and rejected of men but the desire of all nations. And you can't grasp the contradictions and inconsistences till you have been closeted long with God and got to know something of the mysteriousness of his dear heart.

Then Jeremiah having given us this view of the divine government, gives us two notions about human discipline as regulated by God the Judge and God the Father. He tells us two things about discipline. He tells us, in the first place, the goodness of waiting: it is good for a man to wait. It does one good to have a lesson of that sort from a grey-headed and wrinkled-browed man, to have a word from a man who has come out of very dangerous and terrible places. One wishes to get near him the very first moment, and say, "Well, what is it? what have you to say to us now?" And Jeremiah coming up, crushed, sorrowful, heart-wrinkled, pained, says to the young people who are at the door, "Don't enter yet. It is good, my children, to wait." That is the lesson to us. We don't like to wait: impatient because incomplete. Observe you: wait for God. I am not called upon to wait because somebody has put a great waggon across the road; I might get that out of the way. But if God hath set an angel there, I must make distinctions. There is a waiting that is indolence; there is a waiting that is sheer faithlessness; there is a waiting that comes of weakness. This is the true waiting,—wanting to get on, resolute about progress, and yet having a notion that God is just before us there teaching patience. A determination to go, yet a willingness to stand still,—that is the mystery of true waiting.

And then Jeremiah tells us this second thing about the divine government. It is good for a man to bear the yoke. Ephraim like a bullock bemoaned himself; the yoke was very heavy on the shoulder; he was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and he chafed sorely under it, complained and moaned; but by and by the yoke was worn with ease. And then God came and said, "Ephraim is my dear child."

God puts yokes upon us, heavy yokes upon our necks ; sometimes he binds our hands in manacles, and our feet in fetters,—shuts us up and feeds us on bread of affliction and water of affliction ; then we say, "this can't be good for us." But it is. Commend me to the man who has been through deep waters, through very dark places, through treacherous serpent-haunted roads, and who has yet come out with a cheerful heart, mellow, chastened, subdued, and who speaks tenderly of the mercy of God through it all. And that man I may trust with my heart's life. If he speak not words which to my natural taste are best and sweetest and most to be coveted, yet under all his instruction there is a divine mystery, a fatherly tenderness ; and it is better to yield to the remonstrance and instruction of such a man than be driven with great urgency and made impatient by a creature who never knew what it was to have a heart torn in two and the prospects of his life clouded and smitten.

Now some of us have given way, my dear friends, to an abuse of divine discipline, and so we get worse and worse. A right acceptance of God's schooling, God's rod, God's judgment, and God's mercy, mingled together, will cause us to become learned in divine wisdom, tender in divine feeling, gentle and charitable in all social judgment ; good men whilst we are here, and alway waiting, even in the midst of our most diligent service, to be called up into the more fully revealed presence and the still more cloudless light. May all our discipline be to *that* end ! Amen.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER III.

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day: that they might accuse him.

3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out and his hand was restored whole as the other.

(1) Christ's detection of human *incompleteness*. He instantly discovered that there was a man in the synagogue with a withered hand. The *musician* instantly detects a false note; the *painter* instantly detects an inartistic line; the *complete* Christ instantly detects the incomplete man. (2) Jesus Christ's power over *partial* disease. The man had only a withered *hand*. In In some cases Christ had to heal *thoroughly* diseased men, in this case the disease was *local;* yet in both instances his power was the same. (3) Christ's inability to heal the obstinacy of his enemies. Here we come into the moral region, where all power is limited and where omnipotence itself can work effectually only by the consent of the human will. A series of contrasts may be drawn in connection with this point. Christ could raise dead bodies; but dead souls had first to be willing to be raised. Christ could quell the storm on the sea, but he could not quiet the tumult of rebellious hearts. (4) Christ's moral indignation overcoming all outward obstacles. He was indignant with the men who valued the sacredness of a day above the sacredness of a human life. Herein he showed the intense benevolence of his mission. Everything was to give way to the importunity of the wants of men. An important point is involved in the question which Jesus Christ puts in the fourth verse, viz. *not to do good is actually to do evil.*

The instance shows Christ's carefulness over *individual* life. There was only *one* man, yet Jesus Christ gave that solitary sufferer the full benefit of his omnipotence. The Gospel is a revelation of God's love to *individual men.*

There are special *moral* deformities as well as special bodily diseases. Some christians have withered hands, or defective vision, or one-sided sympathies, imperfect tempers, or faulty habits. Christ alone can heal such diseases.

All kinds of sufferers ought to associate the synagogue, the sanctuary, with their best hopes. It should be a place of healing, and

of instruction, and of all holy stimulus.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

This verse shows the working of three determined and most mischievous powers; (1) The power of *prejudice;* (2) The power of *technicality;* (3) The power of *ignorance. Prejudice* as against Christ: *technicality* as opposed to *humanity: ignorance* as forgetful of the fact that in morals as well as in physics the greater includes the less. Sabbath-keeping is less than man-healing.

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa.

8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

(1) There is a time to withdraw from opponents; (2) Withdrawment is not necessarily the result of cowardice; (3) Withdrawment from one sphere ought to be followed by entrance into another.

Great things draw great multitudes. How did Christ exercise his influence over great throngs? (1) He never lowered the moral tone of his teaching; (2) He was never unequal to the increasing demands made upon his power; (3) He never requested the multitude to help him in any selfish endeavours.

No subject can *draw* such great multitudes as the gospel. No subject can so *deeply affect* great multitudes as the gospel. No subject can so profoundly and lastingly *bless* great multitudes as the gospel.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many: insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

(1) Whoever has power to satisfy human necessities will never be in want of applicants. This is most obvious in the case of bodily suffering, but the principle holds good in reference to the deepest wants of human nature. (2) Unclean spirits may pay compliments to the good with changing their own disposition. (3) Unclean spirits are always commanded as in this case not to attempt the revelation of Christ. In the instance before us there was of course a special reason for the injunction; but the principle is applicable to the whole subject of teaching and interpreting Christ and His doctrine.

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.

16 And Simon he surnamed Peter.

17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James, the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

This paragraph may be used as shewing *The beginnings of the Christian Ministry.* (1) The Christian Ministry is an *organization;* (2) the Christian Ministry is *divinely selected;* (a) a warning to *pretenders;* (b) an encouragement to *true*

servants; (c) a guarantee of *adaptation* and *success.* (3) The Christian Ministry is invested with *special powers.* The work of the ministry is to heal and bless mankind. This work can be fully sustained only by close communion with Him who gave the power. Jesus Christ does not give even to ministers power for more than the immediate occasion. They must renew their appeals day by day. To them as to all the church applies the admonition—"Pray without ceasing."

Amongst the general remarks which may be made upon the subject are the following: (1) Some ministers are marked by special characteristics, as for example—Peter and James and John. (2) Some ministers are more prominent than others. One or two of the names in this list are prominently illustrious, others are comparatively obscure. (3) The principal fact to determine is not a question of fame, but a question of *vocation;* whom Christ has called to the ministry He will also accord appropriate honour.

On the 19th verse, remark (1) the possibility of debasing a divine position; (2) the impossibility of detaching the stigma of unfaithfulness. The name of Judas will always be associated with the betrayal, and the name of Simon Peter will always bring to memory his denial of his Lord.

21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

The abuses of friendship. (1) Friendship unable to follow the highest moods of the soul. (2) Friendship unable to see the spiritual meaning of outward circumstances. (3) Friendship seeking to interfere with spiritual usefulness. (4) Friendship seeking to reduce life to common-place order. The sincere servant of Jesus Christ will take his law from the Master and not from public opinion. The most complete detachment from worldly considerations and pursuits is necessary to sustain the soul when friendship itself becomes an assailant. The misinterpretation of our conduct by *friendly* critics often occasions the severest pain which is inflicted upon our spiritual life. The hand of enmity may be concealed within the glove of friendship.

22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if Satan saise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

Christ now encounters open hostility in addition to friendly, though mischievous, remonstrance. A theory of explanation was proposed by the Scribes. Christ's answer to that theory shews (1) that the opinions of leading minds may be entirely fallacious; and (2) that common sense often suggests the best answer to fanciful theories respecting the work of Christ. Christ's whole answer turned upon the common sense of His position. He does not plead *authority;* nor does he plead exemption from the ordinary laws of thought and service; He simply puts in the plea of common sense. This fact supplies the basis for a discourse upon *The relation of common sense to the Gospel.* The Gospel may in this respect be likened to Jacob's ladder, the foot of which was upon the earth. The Gospel has its peculiar

mysteries, and its light too brilliant for the naked eye; at the same time it has aspects and bearings admitting of the most vivid illustration and defence within the region accessible to all minds; on the other hand the paragraph shews (1) the blinding power of religious *prejudice;* and (2) the utter recklessness of religious *bigotry*. With regard to the suggestion of the Scribes it should be remembered (1) that *bold* theories are not necessarily true; and (2) that the espousal of untrue theories will end in the confusion and humiliation of the theorists.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

Human life as affected by two different forces. (1) The strong enemy; (2) The strong friend. It is important to recognize the *strength* of the enemy because it may be supposed that little or no effort is required to encounter his assaults. It should always be pointed out that Jesus Christ never speaks with hesitation as to the results of his repulse of the enemy. He ever represents himself as clothed with more then sufficiency of power. In the text he is set forth as *spoiling* the strong man. It was prophesied that he should bruise the serpent's head.

Application: (1) Man must be under one or other of these forces,—the enemy or the friend. (2) Those who continue under the devil will share the ruin to which he is doomed. When satan's head is bruised all who are in satan's empire will be crushed.

28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Tischendorf reads the thirtieth verse "in danger of the eternal sin." Two aspects of human probation; (1) the pardonable, (2) the unpardonable. (1) The pardonable. (a) Its great extent, "all sins," &c; (b) the implied greatness of the divine mercy. (2) The unpardonable: (a) its intense spirituality: (b) its perfect reasonableness. To sin against the spirit is to cut away the only foundation on which the sinner can stand. Christianity is the appeal of God's spirit to man's spirit: men may sin against the letter, the form, the dogma, and yet be within the pale of forgiveness; but when they revile and defy the very spirit of God they cut themselves off from the current of divine communion.

31 There came then his bretheren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy bretheren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my bretheren?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

(1) The spirituality of Christ's relationships. The kinship of the body is held subordinate to the kinship of the spirit. (2) The true bond of communion with Christ: (a) not merely natural: (b) not merely social. What is the true bond of communion with Christ? *Obedience to God's will.* (a) There is *but one* infallible will; (b) that will appeals for *universal* obedience,—"whosoever." (3) The privileges resulting from communion

with Christ. (a) Intimate relationship,—mother, sister, brother; (b) social communion; this is the *family* idea.

Among the general inferences which may be drawn from this passage are the following: (1) If men are to obey the divine will a great change must pass upon their natural dispositions. (2) If our communion with Christ is *spiritual* it will be eternal. (3) If all the good are Christ's kindred they are the kindred of one another and ought therefore to live in the spirit of brotherhood.

CHAPTER IV.

The parable of the sower has already been analyzed in the 13th chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. We therefore add merely a few general notes. (1) The sower is human: the seed is divine. (2) Even divine influences are affected by human conditions,—"wayside," "stony ground," &c. (3) Even where those conditions are *favourable* there will be difference of spiritual product,—thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold.

Each class of hearers may be specially treated—

WAYSIDE: Opportunity given: Opportunity lost: A constantly watchful enemy.

STONY GROUND: Impulsiveness: Shallowness: Want of conviction and fortitude.

THORNS: Mental preoccupation: Thoughtlessness: Worldlymindedness.

GOOD GROUND: Moral preparation: Earnestness: Visible reward in fruitfulness, which reward is to constitute the most evident proof of the reality of the divine life in the soul.

The whole parable may be used as shewing the operation of four powerful influences in human life. (1) The influence of the devil as seen in the wayside hearers. (2) The influence of frivolity as seen in the stony ground hearers. (3) The influence of worldliness as seen in the thorny ground hearers. (4) The influence of earnestness as seen in the good ground hearers.

21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The subject is: *Christian life viewed as a revelation, a responsibility, and a law.*

I. As a REVELATION: (a) it is to be luminous: (b) it is to be properly placed in the midst of society. The gospel is a great revealing power. In all truth there is power of exposure and judgment; how much more in the highest truth of all.

II. As a RESPONSIBILITY: (a) Stewardship in *doctrine*; (b) Stewardship in *action.*

III. As a LAW: (a) Usefulness is productiveness; (b) Indolence is ruin.

The kingdom of Christ is thus shown to be founded on law. Man never becomes more than a subject: Christ never less than a king.

The City Temple.

THOMAS ARCHER, D.D.

WE have been greatly interested in the Memoir of this eloquent divine as written by the Rev. Dr. MACFARLANE, of Clapham. The work is published by Nisbet and Co. The biographer has occupied only ten chapters, but every line bears upon the subject in hand, so that the work is distinguished by continuous and highly sustained interest. Dr. ARCHER was for thirty-three years the Minister of the United Presbyterian Congregation assembling in Oxendon Chapel, London. He entered most heartily into the multifarious work of a Christian public man in the Metropolis. To a large extent his life was spent in the pulpit and on the platform. Men who have but slender claims to be considered eloquent are often put into prominent places at London anniversaries; but as Dr. ARCHER's claims were many and strong, and his spirit such as to inspire the confidence of miscellaneous assemblies, his career for some years was one of incessant excitement. To a strong head he added a heart of uncommon richness and fervour, and all that was within him could command the service of the most fluent and vigorous speech. Under such circumstances it is not to be wondered at that Dr. ARCHER did more work in the single month of May than many other men did in the whole year. Dr. MACFARLANE wisely points out the unsectarian spirit and habits of his subject; this is very important, as helping to bring together men who are separated from each other by very thin denominational partitions. It is probable that Dr. ARCHER himself might long have remained unknown by Metropolitan Congregationalists had not a distinguished Independent minister in London sought his services in an emergency. Dr. ARCHER's ministerial and pastoral habits, as sketched by the skilful hand of his biographer, are such as ought to be made known to every student for the ministry. His conscientiousness in preparation, his zeal in attending to claims made upon his pastoral solicitude, and the anxious attention which he bestowed upon the intellectual and spiritual culture of the young, we have never known excelled by any servant of God. Though his talents were popular and his tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, yet he seems to have bestowed upon his preparations a minuteness of care which proves alike the soundness of his judgment and the sensitiveness of his conscience. We should greatly like all young men who have the ministry in view

to read again and again Dr. MACFARLANE'S chapters upon the Pulpit and the Pastorate. In reading those chapters we have been reproved and stimulated; we have seen how much work can be condensed into a brief day, and how many urgent calls can be answered by the rigid economist of time. We must not be understood as advising all young men to pursue the exciting public course of Dr. ARCHER. We rather call upon them to eschew the platform, the tea-meeting, the committee-room, and many other scenes of approved dissipation, and to confine themselves for the first seven years at least of their ministry to honest and unsparing preparation for the pulpit. We thank Dr. MACFARLANE, "the old man eloquent," for a piece of most captivating biographic writing. We have greatly enjoyed the treat which he has provided for us; and we cannot doubt that thousands beyond the pale of the United Presbyterian Church will share our gratitude when they read his compact and instructive biography of the noble-minded and true-hearted THOMAS ARCHER.

On Wednesday, February 8th, 1871, we had the great pleasure of preaching the first sermon in the Rev. GILBERT MCALL'S new Chapel, Rouel Road, Bermondsey. The text was 1 Cor., ii., 14. The substance of the sermon appears in the third number of *The City Temple*. Mr. MCALL'S Chapel is commodious and elegant. We accept as an omen for good the marked success which has already attended the ministry of our brother; and in this the day of his brightest ministerial hopes, we pray God to establish his strength and to multiply his usefulness. It was delightful to see the crowd of ministers gathered around him, and to hear how warmly they bestowed their congratulations upon him;—especially gratifying was it to hear his honoured father, the Rev. Professor MCALL, offer the prayer in which the building was dedicated to the worship and glory of ALMIGHTY GOD.

PERSONAL NOTES.—Two or three facts may prove interesting to some future inquirer into ministerial and church questions. The foundation-stone of Cavendish-street Chapel, Manchester, was laid on Wednesday, March 17th, 1847. Sunday, June 11th, 1848, was the last Sunday spent in the former chapel, situated in Mosley-street. On July 2nd, 1848, the Rev. Dr. HALLEY commenced his ministry in Cavendish-street, having spent about nine years in Mosley-street Chapel. On Sunday, September 20th, 1857, Dr. HALLEY preached his farewell sermon in Cavendish-street. On June 10th, 1858, Dr. PARKER accepted the pastorate in succession to Dr. HALLEY. On June 27th, 1869, Dr. PARKER formally resigned the pastorate of Cavendish-street Chapel, having on the previous day accepted a Call to Poultry Chapel, London, "the basis" of that acceptance [according to the written words of the Deacons, signed officially "in the name and on the behalf of the Church"] "being the avowed intention of the Church to embrace the earliest appropriate opportunity to sell the property and erect a noble structure on the best available site that can be obtained."

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 9, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-SIXTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

ALMIGHTY God, though Thou reignest in glory yet dost thou rule in mercy. Thou numberest the stars; Thou dost also bind up the broken in heart. We will say with our fathers that Thy mercy endureth for ever. We enter into thy house this day that we may be healed, comforted, and instructed in the wisdom of the Lord. Do Thou give us a precious sense of Thy nearness. May we know Thee to be at hand by reason of the peace of our conscience, the love of our hearts, and the depth of our child-like trust in Thy strength and goodness. May Thy word be a message of life to every soul. Lift us above the world; deliver us from all slavish fear; and fully establish within us the kingdom of Thy dear Son. Blessed Christ, we thank thee for all Thy mercy to the children of men. Continue to extend it unto us throughout all the years of our earthly discipline and pain, and at last take us into the sanctuary where we shall see Thee face to face. Amen.

CHRIST'S CURES.

"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."—MARK, v., 22—34.

AND behold there came one of the rulers unto Him. This shows us the helplessness of the greatest men. The word ruler indicates position, influence, power, personal supremacy of one kind or another. And yet here is a ruler coming to Jesus Christ for help. There is a point at which all human

might becomes utter weakness. We should have said if any man can do without Christ it will be the man who bears the position and sustains the name of ruler. What is our rulership but a mockery in all the great crises and trying passions and terrible combinations of life? A very pretty thing for convenience sake, useful in a social point of view; but when life is driven to extremity, our rulership is nothing better to us than a nominal honour and sometimes nothing more than a taunting mockery. Know this, then, that there is no title, no position, no supremacy that can cut you off from the fountain of life and make you independent of Emanuel, Son of God.

And said unto him, My daughter lieth at the point of death,—showing us the helplessness of the kindest men. The man before us was not only a ruler but a father; yet ruler and father were found at the feet of Christ. Kindness will do more than mere power. A father will always do more than a ruler. The ruler will work by law, by stipulations, by technical covenants, he will consult the letter of the regulations and he will abide by the bond. But the father will interpret by his heart; he will avail himself of all the suggestions of love; he can't be bound by the narrowness and limitations of the letter,—he does not work by the clock, he works by his heart. Yet the father, the kindest man, came, as well as the ruler, the greatest man. Office and nature, position and life, status and love, will one day have to come to Jesus Christ to make out their petitions and to urge their cases,—for even the lovingest heart, the deepest, grandest, royalest heart, feels that it wants something beyond itself, and that something it can only find in Emanuel, Son of God. And it is often not until the ruler and the father have exhausted themselves that they will come to Christ. Some old writer has well said that "God reserves his hand for a dead lift." As long as ruler and father suppose that anything can be done without supernatural aid, there is a proneness in the human heart not to apply for supernatural help. It is not until we are driven to our wit's end—till our staff has been broken—till our keenest-edged instrument has been turned back—till our vessels have been emptied, and all our resources have been consumed—that we begin to ask if there is a power higher than our own. You never would have been the man you are if your afflictions had not whipped you to Christ. You would have been self-confident, boastful, obtrusive, intolerant, impatient of weakness, if your heart had not been grieved, smitten, impoverished, and if in the depth of your humiliation you had not crawled—you never walked—if you had not crawled to Emanuel, Son of God. This ruler was never so truly a ruler as when he fell on his knees and besought Christ to help him. There is an abasement that is exaltation. There is a humility that is the guarantee of the surest independence.

"And Jesus went with him." A most startling sentence. Are we quite sure that we are reading correctly? "And Jesus went with him." No,—surely there is an omission here; this is too simple, too easy. We find here neither pomp nor circumstance. Jesus acted as though he had been waiting all the time for this man to call upon him, and the moment the man's voice reached his ear he turned round and went with

him. The true reading of the passage must be this: And Jesus drew himself up into a dignified attitude and said unto the ruler, "Oh, you have come at last!" and turning round to the multitude he said, "See, here is one of your great men, and you observe that he too has come in the long run. Now I shall not go to-day, ruler; I shall take the case into my consideration, and should it shape itself to me in anything like a suitable manner, I shall perhaps call upon you to-morrow." Is that the true reading of the passage? No. It is exactly as I find it here. And Jesus went with him. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. If he has not gone with us to our houses, it is because we have not besought him. I never read of any man asking Christ to his house and Christ refusing to go, under the plea of over-engagement, physical exhaustion or personal dislike to humble, contrite men. And to what room in the house does Jairus ask Jesus? He asked Jesus to a sick chamber; to a room that was darkened because his little girl could not bear the light; to a room that was guarded lest any excess of noise should give her pain. It is often just the same with us. There are drawing-rooms in this great Metropolis in which Christ has never set his foot, splendid dining saloons in which the Saviour never broken bread. And yet the owners of these sumptuous apartments, when they have a child ill or are broken down themselves, when they darken their windows and lower their lights, probably they will send for the Son of God up their staircases into their bed-chambers, where they can only whisper to him and when the soul is nearly beaten out of them; then they will ask the Son of God to be guest, they will entertain the Saviour with the hospitality of the sick chamber. Men, is this right? Do be consistent, do be thorough from end to end of life! If you will not ask Jesus into the drawing-room and into the dining-room, don't ask him into the bed-chamber! Do be consistent. It must be a wretched thing for a man to feel that after all he has to come to Christ. He has lived fifty years without him, and never had a word with him, and then just at last, he thought, before taking the fatal plunge, he would like to have a moment's interview with the Son of God. Why not be true to yourself right through, from end to end? And when you stand on the plank point, and the infinite depth is under your feet, why not lift up your dying hand, and with the fragment of a blade, defy the power which, by the indifference of a lifetime, you have held in contempt? That would be sound advice if I looked at one side of the case only; and yet I feel bound to preach this:—It is better for a man bruised, crushed, with one foot in the grave and half his soul in hell, it is better to send for Christ after all, if happily he may be snatched from the burning and may be made into some use in the blessed heaven and kingdom of God.

Let us learn from the readiness with which Christ responded to the ruler's prayer, that he is to-day waiting to hear the prayer of our hearts, that he may instantly and graciously respond to the importunity of our love. We are not only to ask him with our lips, we are to ask him with the lips of our hearts; not in an off-handed manner are we to suggest that he may come if he feels so disposed, but with all the urgency and violence of passion we are to beseech him to return with us and to be our guest

and our friend. If we do so all biblical history, all christian experience, says that he will surely and instantly respond.

"And a certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and spent all that she had, and was nothing better but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus came in the press behind and touched his garment, for she said, If I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole." Another case of applying to Jesus Christ in extremity. For twelve years the woman had suffered. She had not only suffered, but suffered many things; she had not only suffered many things, but she had suffered many things under scientific treatment. She had spent a great deal of money, not only so, she had actually spent all that she had; and when she hadn't a penny in her hand, nor a crust in her house, she came to Jesus Christ. Let us suppose, which I am ready to do, that until that time she had not heard of Jesus Christ; let us assume that she did come (as every woman ought to do) the moment she heard of Christ. Still, we do see a human creature in poverty, in distress, in extremity coming to Jesus Christ to put a certain case before him, and Jesus Christ never reproaches such people. He never says, "What have you brought with you?" He never says, "Am I the first physician you have asked to heal you?" He never inquires if his name is first or last on the list. He treats each case on its own merits. Where there is necessity there is a call upon his pity and love and power and infinite tenderness of heart. He does not ask for introductions that are formal and ceremonious. Wherever he finds a needy man he finds common ground of intercourse with that man; all the fitness he requires is to feel our need of him, our hunger, thirst, nakedness, sorrow for sin,—these are the elements of the only introduction that he requires. If we go to him in our fulness and strength and sufficiency and pride, we shall never find him at liberty to talk to us, or if he do bestow one moment's attention upon us, he will speak to us as it were in lightning and thunder and just anger. But if we can hardly crawl to his feet, if we can hardly put a sentence together, if we can only hint to him some broken desire of the heart, no matter, he has pledged himself instantly to hear even a child in distress or danger. He will come to us in the time of our peril and our penitence and our heart's desire for his salvation.

"She said, If I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole." A woman said that. Why, don't women say all the brightest and most beautiful things that ever are said? If I may but touch his clothes! Only a woman could have found that out. It is an original idea, so far as mere criticism is concerned; because it flashes from the side of love, impulse, passion of the heart—the white heat of love. Was there not another woman who startled the Saviour by a most beautiful expression—took him as it were by surprise, if we may use that expression reverently concerning him who knew all things? Jesus said unto her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and throw it unto the dogs." "True, Lord," the woman answered, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the children's table." Jesus hearing that, was taken captive. Those little golden sentences lay hold of him, and he can't go away. The finest things you ever said in your life you said in sorrow and

affliction. I have in the course of my pastoral experience heard very common men say some beautiful things in the dark and cloudy day, when their fig tree was being barked, when their one ewe lamb was being taken away. Some of the finest, richest letters I ever received have been written by people who were in deep trouble, in sore agony of spirit; so beautiful have those letters been, that one has hardly been able to find the point of consistency between what we have known of the writer in common times and in ordinary circumstances and the beauty, the refinement, and the pathos of the composition.

Here is a man whose memory is clearly before me at this moment, who never in the ordinary course of life said one memorable word. I have seen that man in affliction in one room and his dear little girl dying in another room, and he could not go to her; I have seen the dead child brought in to him before it was consigned to the tomb. And out of that man's lips, in that holy, dark, yet brilliant hour, I have heard some of the richest, tenderest, most beautiful things I have ever heard from any speaker. So, in the case of the ruler, in the case of the woman who had the issue of blood, and on other occasions in the New Testament,—we are surprised by the originality of the conception and by the beauty of the expression. Yes, and when the world's account is summed up, we shall find that we owe more to grief than we do to joy, and that sorrow has been the veiled angel of God come to teach us some of the deepest lessons which can ever be learnt by human students.

"And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. And he said, Daughter thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace and be whole of thy plague."

There is touching *and* touching. The multitude touched the Saviour and got nothing out of him. The poor trembling woman laid her fingers upon the hem of his garment and at once was strengthened and made young again. There is hearing *and* hearing. There is not a person I presume in this house to-day who does not hear every tone of my voice. Some may only be hearing with the animal ear; others are hearing with the ear of the soul, and every tone is music, because it speaks and breathes the word and love of God. "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou, Who touched me?" Jesus individualized one particular touch. Thou seest a great congregation in the church and sayest thou that this is not christian England? Thou seest all the pews are let and sayest thou the people are not religious? There may be nearness to Christ without a loving touch. There may be a kind of delight in his presence, in his society, without that proximity, nearness, which brings the life out of his life into ours. So, there is a reading of the Bible that gets nothing out of the Bible, and there is a consideration of scriptural truth which enriches and blesses the soul. "I thank thee, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid

these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes; even so Father it seemeth good in thy sight."

Shall we touch Jesus to-day, as we never touched him before? Your old age will vanish, your wrinkles will go away, your sorrows will be taken up, and turned as it were into beauteous rainbows of promise, and the earth and the heavens shall become new and young and bright. It is with Christ as it is with ourselves. Some men will speak to us and get nothing in return. Other men will speak to us and they will surprise us,—get revelations, expositions, declarations, which perhaps we had never intended to make, and of which we did not know ourselves capable of making. When Johnson lay a dying, and Burke called upon him, he said, "Don't let me see him! That fellow will kill me in an hour." He could have seen many other men, and they would never have injured him; they would not have drawn upon his life; they would not have drawn upon the sap of his manhood. But when a great man like Edmund Burke called upon him, whose every question called for a revelation, whose every suggestion sounded the depths of the mind, he said, "I can't bear him; he will kill me in an hour."

There are men who can draw virtue out of one; and there are others whose touch makes one feel very cold and poor. It is the same way with you hearers. After all there is a good deal of truth in the statement that "eloquence is in the hearer." If I see a man looking at me with brightness in his eye and a smile upon his face, I can preach ever so much better. I preach to that man who is the electrical hearer. That is the man who touches me and draws out such virtue as I am able to communicate. It must be very hard work to preach to a brick wall. I don't know that it can be very tempting work to preach to empty pews. The youth with a bright face and keen eye and eager look will help one. The old man with his silvered hairs, looking as if we were saying something that had blessed his life, will help one. And even your sorrow looking up with its chastened head in the house of God will draw upon one's heart-strength and love and tenderness. Let us know, therefore, that there is working *and* working, hearing *and* hearing. There is a shake of the hand which says, "this is courtesy;" there is another shake that says, "this is cordiality." Give me the latter.

After curing this woman of her plague, Jesus Christ went on to the ruler's house. I shall not follow him to that house to-day,—time will not allow. But there is a point here that fills me with thankfulness, delight inexpressible. This point, namely,—*That Jesus Christ does so much incidental work in society*. We find him going to a certain point to do a certain work, and it was on the road that he performed this miracle of healing. It did not enter, so far as we can see, into the main purpose. It was something aside, collateral, incidental. Why, the incidental work of some men is grander than the set purposes of the lifetime of others. Some men will do more overwork than others will do within the space of the hireling's day. This was not in the bond; this is a parenthesis! And there is more in one parenthesis of God's literature than in all the libraries of man's writing.

People say, Will God answer prayer? Will God alter the laws of the universe? Will God come out of his way to do this or that in the hour of our importunity? It is a difficullt question; we do not pretend to be able to answer it in a manner altogether satisfactory to the natural reason. But here I find Jesus Christ set on a given purpose, going from one point to another that he may attend to some case which has been brought before him, and on the road he does this most beautiful deed. So in the government of his great universe he has a purpose. He is moving steadily to one culminating point. But can't he do a good deal on the road? Whilst he is set in that direction can he not speak to you and me now and then and bless us? I prefer, having looked at this question as well as I possibly can look at it, to believe that though God has great laws and main purposes, and his face is set towards one given point, on the road He can turn aside and give life to the down-trodden and save the contrite soul.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER IV.

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

In addition to the analysis of this parable given in the 13th chapter of Matthew, the following points may be taken.

(1) Though the sower sleep after his labour, yet the process of germination goes on night and day. (2) Simple beginnings and practical results may be connected by mysterious processes: "he knoweth not how." There is a point in christian work where knowledge must yield to mystery. (3) As the work of the sower is assisted by natural processes ("the earth bringeth forth of itself," &c.), so the seed of truth is aided by the natural conscience and aspiration which God has given to all men. (4) The mysteriousness of processes ought not to deter from reaping the harvest. The spiritual labourer may learn from the husbandman.

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

(1) Small beginnings may have great endings. (a) This should

encourage all holy labourers; (b) this should alarm all wicked men. (2) *Vitality* more important than *magnitude.* (a) This applies to creeds; (b) to church agencies and organisations; (c) to a public profession of faith. (3) The least thing in nature a better illustration of divine truth than the greatest object in art. The least of all seeds more fitly represents the kingdom of heaven than the most elaborate of all statuary. The natural flower is a revelation of God, the artificial flower is a proof of the skill of man. It should be noticed that human art is never referred to in the scripture as illustrating the divine nature and purposes, but continual reference is made to all the works of creation. God illustrates himself by himself.

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

This text may be used as supplying three lessons as to the duties of the christian teacher. (1) He must adapt himself to his hearers. Are they young? are they educated? are they courageous? are they surrounded by any peculiar circumstances? (2) He must consider his hearers rather than himself. This was Jesus Christ's method. The question should be not what pleases the preacher's taste, but what is most required by the spiritual condition of the people. (3) He must increase his communication of truth and light according to the progress of his scholars. Reticence is power. In teaching children the teacher does not dazzle them by the splendour of his attainments, he adapts the light to the strength of their mental vision. The preacher should always know more of divine truth than the hearer. Christ's method of imparting knowledge is, so far as we can infer, unchanged. He has yet more light to shed upon his word.

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

(1) The organised Church in peril,—Christ and his disciples were all in this tempest. (2) Dangers beset the church even whilst it is carrying out the express commands of Christ,—Jesus himself bade them pass over unto the other side. (3) The spirit of Christ, not the body of Christ, must save the the church in all peril. The sleeping body was in the vessel, but it exercised no influence upon the storm. It is possible to have an embalmed Christ and yet to have no Christianity. It is also possible to have the letter of Christ's word without the spirit and power of his truth. (4) Jesus Christ answering the personal appeal of the imperilled church. The power of the servant is often exhausted,—exhausted power should betake itself to supplication. (5) All the perils of the church may be successfully encountered by profound faith in God, v. 40.

CHAPTER V.

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.
2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:
4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.
5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.
6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
7 And cried, with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.
8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.
9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.
10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.
11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.
12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.
13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.
14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.
15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.
16 And they that saw it told them how it befel to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.
17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

This story may be viewed in four aspects:—I. The Human; II. The Divine; III. The Diabolic; IV. The Social.

I. The Human. The human aspect is seen both in shadow and in light:—(1) As seen in shadow: (a) Man impure,—unclean spirit; (b) Man dis-socialised,—his dwelling was among the tombs; (c) Man unrestrained,—no man could tame him, no not with chains; (d) Man self-tormented,—crying and cutting himself with stones. (2) As seen in light: (a) Man tranquilised,—sitting; (b) Man civilised,—clothed; (c) Man intellectualised,—in his right mind.

II. The Divine. (1) Christ identified by his *holiness;* (2) Christ feared for his *power;* (3) Christ recognised in the realm of *spirits*.

III. The Diabolic. (1) As showing great resources,—"we are many;" (2) As displaying subordination,—they besought Christ, &c.; (3) As revealing destructiveness,—whatever they touch, man or beast, they destroy.

IV. The Social. (1) Society trembling under manifestations of spiritual power; spiritual power is always more or less mysterious,—"they were afraid." (2) Society caring more for beasts than for men,—they prayed him to depart out of their coasts.

The prayer of the unclean spirits may be regarded as showing the *intolerableness of life in hell*. They wished to be sent anywhere but to the pit.

Or thus:—

The story may be used as showing at once the greatness and the weakness of man. (1) His greatness,—seen in the fact that *many* devils can enter into him. Shew how men may be great in *evil* as well as in good,—tyrants, warriors, conspirators, hypocrites, &c. (2) His weakness,—seen in his yielding where he ought to have resisted; in his helplessness when he had once admitted the power of evil into his

heart,—seen also in his fear of the only power that could redeem him from his bondage. The last point should be urged as one of great importance,—showing how the tendency of sin is actually to destroy confidence not only in God as Creator and Preserver, but actually as REDEEMER. (a) It raises sceptical questions; (b) It urges the doctrine of self-elevation.

Or thus:—

The story may be treated as showing some phases of Christ's ministry. (1) Christ caring for *one* man; (2) Christ's rule over evil *spirits;* (3) Christ reconstructing manhood; (4) Christ showing himself the source of all blessings,—(a) self control,—"sitting;" (b) civilisation,—"clothed;" (c) mental restoration,—"in his right mind."

Christ's conduct in this case reveals the *fearlessness* of his spirit. (1) Holiness is fearless; (2) Philanthropy is fearless; (3) Trust in God is fearless. Show how fearlessness is required of all who follow Christ,—how it is necessary to beneficent activity,—and how it can only be sustained by ever-deepening communion with God.

The whole parable may be treated as showing—(1) The Fearlessness; (2) The Aggressiveness; (3) The Beneficence of Christianity.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

(1) The recollection of our Christless state should beget a spirit of distrust in ourselves. The healed man was naturally anxious to remain at the side of his healer. (2) Shew the possibility of being under the protection of Christ even though far from his physical presence. The healed man was as surely under the care of Christ when miles away as when within reach of his hand. Christ always pointed towards a spiritual reign, and both incidentally and directly discouraged trust in merely fleshly presence and power.

Christ's answer may be taken as shewing how the Gospel is to be propagated: (1) It is to be declared at *home;* (2) it is to be founded on *personal experience;* (3) it is to acknowledge the power and goodness of God *alone.*

Every christian should himself be the chief argument in favour of christianity. The christian is not only to *have* an argument, he is himself to *be* an argument. The man whose sight was restored said to those who enquired concerning the process of restoration—"one thing I know that whereas I was blind now I see." Had he allowed himself to be lured into a discussion about Moses or the supposed character of Christ he might have been overcome by superiority of address on the part of his critics, but so long as he confined himself to his own case his position was invincible. The recovered man whose case is given in this chapter could always answer the quibbles of enquirers by a reference to his own experience. What has Christ done for us? What is our present state as compared with onr former condition? What is our moral tone? What is our attitude in relation to the future? If we can answer these questions satisfactorily we have a sufficient reply to all controversial difficulties and to all speculative scepticism.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 16, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-SEVENTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

THOU, who art glorious in holiness, hast revealed unto us a glorious Gospel. The day-spring from on high hath visited us. The light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ hath shone upon us. It is indeed a marvellous light; we will rejoice and be glad in it, and praise the Lord for a revelation of glory so great. We will answer the glory of thy love with vehement joy and with life-long thankfulness. May no cloud ever obscure the brightness of thy presence! May we walk in the light of thy countenance all the day, and may even the darkness itself be light round about us. We would extinguish all other lights, and walk steadfastly all our days in the lustre of thy love. Father of mercies, perfect our strength, that our lives may follow closely the godly desires of our hearts. Blessed Jesus, we would know no glory but the glory of thy cross; we would see beyond its shame and pain and degradation. It is to us the brightest object in creation,—the light without which our souls would stumble and perish in darkness. Lord hear us! Lord revive us! Lord keep us! Let our prayer prevail with Thee, because Jesus is mighty to save. Amen.

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

"The glorious gospel of the blessed God."—1 TIMOTHY, i., 11.

MY particular object in calling attention to these words is to enquire concerning the claim of the gospel of Jesus Christ to have the word glorious attached to it. We are not about to attempt an analysis, special, minute, and exhaustive, of all that is comprehended in the word gospel. We are simply about to ask

what there is, looking at the gospel broadly, to warrant the application of such a word as *glorious*. Sometimes this word is used very carelessly, off-handedly, without special meaning or application to the subject in hand. Sometimes men use it in the heat of speech, when they would not write it in the calmness of their studies. For example :—Men will exclaim, "What a glorious landscape!" "What a glorious river!" "What a glorious scene!" Up to a given point the application of that word may, under such circumstances, be allowable ; yet, if submitted to criticism and to reason, they would say who had used the word that a term less fervent, less comprehensive, might be substituted with advantage for the word glorious. As used by the apostle Paul in this verse, is the word glorious merely an ecstatic expression? Is it used merely to relieve an overflowing emotion on his part? or is there under it reason, argument, solidity, indefeasible right and title to so magnificent a description? There is morality in language. If we ought not to say that a pound has in it twenty ounces, we ought not to say that an object is glorious when it is not glorious,—especially when we deal with the highest questions and considerations which affect human character and destiny. We ought to be precise, critical, definite, in the language which we employ. I want you, then, to consider briefly and broadly, without minuteness of analysis, what title, right, or claim the gospel of the blessed God has to be considered glorious.

The gospel declares itself to be God's greatest answer to man's greatest want. It is enough, in the meantime, to know what claim the gospel asserts on behalf of itself; because according to the scope and intensity of that assertion is the judgment which the gospel is preparing for itself. The gospel does not profess to be one answer amongst many. The gospel claims to be the one answer which God makes to the problem of sin and the agony of sorrow. The gospel does not speak with a hesitating diffident tone. It does not put itself in an excusatory attitude. It does not ask to be heard on sufferance, and to be judged by some modified law of criticism. It stands clear out in the daylight. It says, in personal language, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." So far it establishes some claim upon our attention, if not upon our confidence, by its very boldness, by the heroic sentiment that is in it. You like that which is clear, bold, well-defined? You have it in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Find me one instance in which the gospel hesitates, or in which Jesus Christ sets before men two possibilities of salvation. Show me where Jesus Christ or the apostles failed in firmness, in precision, in defining man's condition before God, and man's way back to all that he had lost and to the higher blessing of a new creation. You are challenged to find such instances. There is not one such instance to be found from end to end of Jesus Christ's ministry. And I maintain this fact as in the meantime a claim upon our attention. Here is a voice which puts down all other voices. Here is a light which puts out by its dazzling glory all other beams. Here is a claim urged upon our hearts with all the specific firmness of dogmatism and all the omnipotent tenderness of God's own pathos. It is, then, one of two things. The issue is an issue sharply defined. Either this gospel is the most gigantic and self-convicting imposition, or it

merits the epithet "glorious" as describing its scope and its divine meaning. I should like you enquirers who are considering the claims of christianity, who are looking seriously at religious subjects, to weigh the worth of this suggestion (which does not in the meantime touch for a moment the truth of the gospel),—viz., the universality of its appeal, the decision of its tone, the preciousness of its offers, the sovereign dogmatism of its claims. If the gospel had come with an apology in its hands—if the gospel had said, "Now, I think that upon the whole I have met the human difficulty better than ever it has been met before; I think that I suggest a ground on which men may fairly meet to talk over great subjects which affect time and eternity,"—then the gospel would have put itself upon its trial; it would have been a hypothetic gospel, contingent, turning upon points, upon a variety of opinions, upon the acuteness of discrimination on the part of the observers. But the gospel, right or wrong, of heaven or hell, does nothing of the kind. Its claims are minute, positive, ultimate. Its tone begs for no sufferance. It is the decree of sovereignty—it is the proclamation of God. You who doubt this have to encounter the claim of the gospel as the gospel itself makes it out,—and certes! you have breadth enough and scope enough to pass judgment upon. This is not some little, peddling, subtle doctrine that comes in upon you you don't know how,—in microscopic points, and in a state of fluidity which is so subtle as to escape all your power of analysis. It comes in great breadths of sunshine, in great bursts and volumes of light. It claims your attention upon every ground; not pared and pinched away, but the broadest possible standing that the human intellect or the human heart can suggest or require. You say rightly about a man who comes forward in critical times and enunciates, boldly and clearly, a theory of extrication, of political redemption and progress, "Well, after all, right or wrong, he is a glorious fellow." Why is he a glorious man? Because in the midst of political and social chaos, when hardly any two opinions can be reconciled, when there is a great deal opposed upon every side, he arises, incurring disdain, contumely, censure, so far as his doctrines are concerned, and says, "In my opinion it is this way,—be just and fear not." You rightly accord to that man words of admiration, epithets of applause and honour, even though you may not agree with the sentiments which he promulgates. If, therefore, I look at the heroic tone of the gospel, I say there is something in that tone which touches all that is deep and true in my nature, and that so far the gospel may be called a glorious gospel. Never begging to be excused for making the suggestion; never hoping if you please you will kindly indulge this suggestion, and put up as well as you can with that doctrine; never apologising for its own existence, and squeezing itself into the smallest possible compass, and begging on Sunday to let it sit down here and there,—but with boldness, with the claim of right, and with sovereign supremacy, it smashes every idol, declares against all vice, gathers around its head all light, lustre, glory, effulgence, and claims not the lowest seat in the temple or society but the very throne of the sanctuary of God. I can say all this without pronouncing any opinion about the merits of the gospel. I am speaking now solely of the claims which it makes on behalf of itself.

"Well," you say, "this is very dogmatic on the part of the gospel, and you don't believe in dogmatism." Paul is no more dogmatic than Euclid. I dare say you might meet a boy here and there who, taking up Euclid, would say, "This is too dogmatic for me." It is a good deal too dogmatic for most boys. When Euclid says that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, the boy may say, "That admits of discussion, I think, and you ought to adopt a more charitable tone." Geometry cannot afford to be sentimentally charitable. You can only build geometry upon positive declaration, upon dogmatic truth. "Well," but you say, "it is not so easy to be dogmatic in morals as it is in mathematics." Quite so. Yet he would be wanting, I think, in the first elements of common sense who supposed that because the kingdom was greater the king was less decisive in his sovereignty and less positive in his claims. Can you do without the influences of nature in growing your bread and other articles of food? It seems to be very dogmatic on the part of Almighty God that he should have arranged nature as he has done. Why can't I sow my seed in the field in August, and reap my harvest in February? Here is the earth, yonder is the shining sun, the healthful vital air is breathing its benediction over the world. Why, then, seeing that I have light and soil and moisture and air, can I not plant my seed when I like and reap it when I please? But you can't do so. Your theory may abstractly look very liberal and noble, but facts are against you. Why can't you devise some new plan of getting bread? Why should you submit to the old humdrum way of ploughing the earth, and throwing in seed, and reaping the wheat, and grinding it, and turning it into bread? Why can't you be original, inventive, creative as to your daily food? You are a man. You can think, you can conspire, you can plot, you can curse and swear, you can blaspheme God. Why can't you be original in the way of getting the morsel of food you want day by day? Yet God shuts you up within the prison of his laws. He cages you within the bars of his sovereign limitations. You may chafe, blaspheme, roar against him like a beast of prey, but you must submit. This law is liberty. This imprisonment within divinely appointed boundaries is freedom. The appointments of God are the conditions of true liberty and blessed enjoyment. No more can you do without the gospel than you can do without the influences of nature in the lower ranges of your life. The gospel of the blessed God claims to be as necessary to the redemption and sanctification and glorification of the soul as the sun, the air, the dew, the earth claim to be necessary to the growth of your food and to the maintenance of your physical system.

Being God's greatest answer to man's greatest want, the gospel must supply that which is most needful to man. Let us suppose in prosecuting this enquiry that it is admitted that man is a sinner. Let it be granted by us all that man is not before God as he ought be in his moral nature. Let us dismiss, if you please, any offensive statement of the doctrine of original sin and hereditary depravity; and let it be assumed that we are agreed that man is not what he ought to be in some particular or other, that there is a stain upon his nature, that his spirit is tainted, that he has done the things he ought not to have

done and left undone the things that he ought to have done. Let us be agreed upon this, that in going through our yesterdays we *do* find actions that we cannot approve, thoughts that were impure, words that were cowardly, untrue, unjust. Let us further assume that all these recollections are sufficiently poignant and intense to torment our consciences. Now surely I am not asking too much in asking to have all that allowed. That the past has in it a moral sting, that we dare not recal certain passages in our lives because they become spectral, they seem to fashion themselves into divine judgments, they force upon us claims which we cannot satisfy. What is most important to man under such circumstances? Oblivion? Then by so much you substract from the volume of his manhood. Heedlessness about spiritual affairs and moral consequences? Then you increase his weakness and aggravate his guilt. What under such circumstances is most important to men? This—if it be possible to get it—Pardon! Consider the whole question, long and deeply, as some of us have considered it, and you can't reach a better conclusion than that. The thing most important to man under such circumstances as have been described is pardon. This is precisely what the gospel proposes to give to all who accept it. Through this man Christ Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon." Not merely pardon, not grudgingly pardon, but he will meet the contrite broken-hearted sinner with wave on wave of forgiveness,—He will multiply to pardon,—He will pardon with pardons,—He will receive the sinner graciously and love him freely.

I cannot hear such words as these without instantly feeling that they involve a glorious conception. Whatever these words may be worth they are in spirit and in tone unprecedented in magnificence. But you will not know how magnificent they are until you know the bitterness of sin. If you are at fault there, then the word pardon will have no music for your soul's ear. If sin is nothing to you but a speck of dust on the surface of your life, which you can brush away at pleasure and be just as you were before, then the gospel will not be to you a glorious and magnificent gospel. But if you be devoured by evil memories, if you be stung by self-reproaches, if sin be unto you that abominable thing which God hateth, if an evil thought—a thing without shape, that has never yet expressed itself in any language—be to you a pain and torture and agony, if you have reached that refinement of moral sensibility, and I come to you and say, You may be pardoned, your sins which are many may all be forgiven you,—what will be your response? This,—It is a *glorious* gospel! He who sees and feels the darkness of guilt will best comprehend and most truly appreciate the lustre and dazzling effulgence of God's great offer of redemption.

Pardon is not enough. Pardon seems merely to restore us to a kind of negative condition. Pardon may mean, in some cases, where not fully understood and realized, mere innocence. There was a stain upon the heart: that stain has been removed by a powerful detergent, and now the heart is pretty much as it was in years gone by. That may be some

people's notion of pardon. But when God pardons there is another step involved, and another element enters into consideration. Man becomes not only pardoned,—he becomes also holy. Holiness is more than innocence. Holines denotes vitality of sympathy as between the soul and God. Holiness is the comprehensive word which includes the whole discipline of life, the whole trust of the heart in God, and the continuous aspiration of the spirit after the perfectness of God's own beauty. We are called unto holiness. Are some of us satisfied with pardon? Then we have not been pardoned, our sins have only been covered up, they have not been taken away. He who is pardoned by God longs with all the vehemence of love to be like God. He whose soul has been touched by the living blood of the one Great Sacrifice says, "Make me, great God, holy as Thou art holy!" There is a beauty of holiness. God is not only holy, He is glorious in holiness. Mark the emphasis and completeness of that expression. Holiness itself is beautiful. Holiness itself is glorious. But here is our Father described not only as holy but as glorious in holiness. Holy holiness! Infinitely, infinitely pure holiness! What is our call as addressed to us by Jesus Christ? "Be ye holy as your Father in heaven is holy." When a man sees the possibility of such holiness, when he sees that lofty ideality of character set before him, when he sees through Christ what men may become,—then he tramples under foot all theories, all morals, all human suggestions and desires, and fixing his eye upon Christ and his truth, he says, There, and there only, have I found the glorious gospel.

Then I want to know somethng, however little, about the future. Is this little globe of dust everything? When I have lived my few years and death calls for me, is that cold grave the full stop in the literature of existence? Has that little child been extinguished altogether? Are there such things as roots planted in the grave and bearing beautiful and odorous flowers in some brighter clime? Shall it be alike with the righteous and the wicked in the dark sad day of death? Shall the chaff be equal in value to the wheat? Shall the man who has thought and preached and written and suffered on behalf of virtue and truth and purity, die like a man who has revelled in sensuality and uncleaness and all evil? I want to know something about these things. Can yonder thin trembing yet opaque veil be removed aside a little that I may see if there is darkness beyond it or some little gleam of light? And after I ask these questions about the future I receive this answer,—Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Absent from the body present with the Lord. If our earthly house, if this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! These are they that came out of great tribulation, they washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb,—therefore are they before the throne and worship God day and night in His temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them to living fountains of water. And God shall wipe all tears away from their eyes. And when this voice has ceased, in response to my anxious urgent enquiries, I exclaim, It is a *glorious* gospel!

I intended to dwell upon three points of application, but I cannot. I shall just name them therefore. If this be a glorious gospel, what manner of persons ought we to be who profess it? If this be a glorious gospel, ought we to be ashamed of it? If this be a glorious gospel, are we not called upon to publish it? These were my points of application, constituting a sermon in themselves. Let me conclude by saying the older I grow, the more of men and things I see, the more deeply I study life, the more thoroughly I comprehend the discipline of Providence, the more I look at the future, the more I feel the burden and the torment of sin, the more do I realise the intense and everlasting glory of the truth as it is in Jesus.

BROKEN COLUMNS.

Under this heading we shall occasionally give Outlines of Sermons.

The Crises of Faith.

"My steps had well nigh slipped." — Psalms, lxxiii., 2.

There are perilous moments in the life of the soul. The best and strongest men have experienced this,—Psalmist, Job, Peter, &c. (I.) Apparent inequalities of Providence. (II.) Sudden assaults of temptation. (III.) Disappointed confidence in professing christians. (IV.) Earnest prayers unanswered. (V.) Mistaken views of the necessary mysteries of divine government.

What is the security? *Christ's view of God's sovereignty;* (a) Fatherly; (b) Disciplinary; (c) Redemptive; (d) Universal.

When did the steps of the Psalmist well nigh slip? When he *reasoned?* No. When he *prayed?* No. When he *saw*,—shew hence the deceptiveness of mere appearances.

Excuses.

"Lord, I will follow Thee, *but*——" Luke, ix., 61.

I. A Good Intention. II. A Sentimental Hindrance.

Explain what is meant by following Christ. Show how love of Christ increases and ennobles all family love.

In dealing with excuses, note such as—(1) My secular engagements are at present too heavy; (2) I want ten years more worldly enjoyment; (3) I am afraid I am not worthy to assume the christian profession; (4) I should like a good many mysteries to be cleared up first; (5) I want to get into a better state of *feeling.*

Show that all such excuses are (1) Selfish; (2) Short-sighted; (3) Frivolous.

He who gives the *command* will give the *strength.*

On the Duty of Warning Men.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."—Ezekiel, iii., 17-19.

In these solemn words there are three things set forth most distinctly and impressively.

I. That the ministry of divine truths is a special ordinance of God.

Ezekiel was made a watchman by divine power as surely as God's hand set the sun in the heavens. The gift of interpreting God is not a *natural* endowment. We say that "poets are born not made," but the sentiment might be enlarged so as to comprehend all classes of men,—painters, architects, engineers, musicians, servants.

When it is said that the true interpreter of God is specially qualified, the principle of *favouritism* is not laid down. It is the principle of *order*. Mere partiality implies regard to favourable circumstances—choice founded upon special excellence. In the case of the ministry God has ever chosen the poor, the unlikely, the despised, &c.

In the case before us, God makes a broad distinction between himself and the prophet. God is sovereign, Ezekiel is subject.

First: The watchman is not *self-constituted* ("I have made thee").

Second: The watchman is not *self-instructed* ("Hear the word at my mouth").

Third: The watchman is not *self-sent* ("Give them warning from me").

II. That the ministry of divine truths is entrusted with the duty of warning men.

Ezekiel was called to warn both the wicked and the righteous. Warning is a solemn word: it is more than instruction,—more than definition. It is expressive of intense concern,—fervid and importunate earnestness. Three mistakes about warning may be pointed out—

First: That warning is independent of *knowledge*.

Second: That warning betokens *hardness* of nature.

Third: That warning is the *lowest and easiest* duty of the ministry.

All these mistakes may be refuted by a reference to the case of Paul.

In what connection did Paul set the duty of warning? "Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom" (Coloss., i., 28).

Did Paul show hardness of heart when he warned men? Hear him: "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts, xx., 31.)

Did Paul regard warning as of inferior importance? Hear him: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess. v., 14).

III. That the duty of warning men is connected with a just distribution of responsibility.

We are not told that warning will be successful. We are merely told that it will fix responsibility on the proper party. (1) A lesson to *preachers*. (2) An appeal to *hearers*.

A HOMILETIC ANALYSIS

OF THE

Gospel by Mark.

CHAPTER V.

22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

The case of the ruler may be treated as shewing *the instructiveness of domestic affliction.* (1) It shews the helplessness even of the *greatest* men,—the applicant was a *ruler*, yet his rulership was of no avail in this case. All human influence is limited. (2) It shews the helplessness even of the *kindest* men,—the applicant was a *father*, yet all his yearning affection was unable to suggest a remedy for his afflicted child. (3) It shows the need of Christ in every life: looking over the whole chapter we find a demoniac, a ruler, a child, and a woman who required the services of Jesus Christ.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse,

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

(1) Human *extremity*,—the woman had suffered many years and had spent all, and had become worse rather than better: she may be taken, therefore, as a picture of human extremity. (2) Human *earnestness*,—though much people thronged the Saviour, and she was weak, yet she found her way to the Healer. This may be taken as illustrative of the power of earnestness in seeking Christ. All of us have to go to Christ through a crowd,—a crowd of objectors, of indifferent persons, of apathetic professors, of quibbling critics, &c.: if we be in earnest we shall find our way to Christ. (3) Divine *sensitiveness.* Jesus Christ knew the difference between mere pressure and the touch of loving faith. This shows that mere nearness to Christ is not enough. A man may be in the church and yet far from the Saviour; a man may be looking at the Cross without seeing the Sacrifice. Expose all the pretences

which are founded upon ancestry, nationality, the observance of religious rites, &c. (4) *Public confession.* The poor woman drew near and told him all the truth, and she told it in the hearing of the crowd. Thankfulness should always be courageous and explicit. Where there is a keen appreciation of the work of Christ in the soul all timidity and hesitation will be overborne by the intensity of thankfulness and joy. This is the true explanation of christian profession and testimony.

35 While yet he spake there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi: which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

41 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.

43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that that something should be given her to eat.

This part of the incident shows how two views may be taken of the same case. (1) There is the human view,—the child is dead, trouble not the Master. Men see the outside, they deal with facts rather than with principles; they see the circumference, not the centre. (2) There is Christ's view,—only believe; man is called beyond facts, he is called into the sanctuary of God's secret. We often put the period where God himself puts only a comma: we say "dead," when God himself says "sleepeth." Jesus Christ was laughed to scorn when he put a new interpretation upon old facts. All who follow him must expect to hear christian sentiments and predictions misunderstood and perhaps contemned.

The incident may be treated as showing three things:—(1) Christ not sent for until the last moment; (2) Christ misunderstood when sent for; (3) Christ never sent for in vain.

GENERAL NOTE ON THE WHOLE CHAPTER.

Look at the various instances of healing recorded in this chapter:—Demoniac; woman; child; ruler. We train men to attempt the cure of special diseases, but Jesus Christ treated all afflictions alike of the mind and body, and never did His energy prove insufficient for the demands which were made upon it. What was the secret of the universality of His healing? It was that he infused *life* into all who came to Him in their necessity. All other healing is but local and temporary. The gift of *life* alone can throw off all diseases and recover the failing tone of the mind. Jesus Christ never displays surprise or betrays hesitation when the most extraordinary cases are brought under his attention. The calmness of his spirit and the perfect mastery of his working incidentally show the fulness of his godhead. The cure of the demoniac alone would have made the reputation of any other man. In Christ's case it is written down as

an ordinary event, so far as the exercise of his own power is concerned. The speciality is on the side of the sufferer, not on the side of the Healer. Christ's interruption on his way to the ruler's house, and his cure of the poor woman, should show that his life is an unceasing ministration of good. He was going towards the house of suffering, yet on his way he healed a woman who had been given up by many physicians! The beneficent act was a kind of parenthesis. There is more history condensed into the very parentheses of Christ's life than can be found in all the volumes of other lives. The parenthetic characteristic of this cure may be dwelt on as showing that even in his movement towards a given point God may be interrupted by the appeal of human necessity.

CHAPTER VI.

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

(1) Christian doctrine applicable to *all classes of men;* (2) Christian doctrine calculated to excite the profoundest *surprise;* (3) Christian doctrine always conveying the impression of *unique* power; (4) Christian doctrine showing the insignificance of the personality of its teachers. Even Christ himself, according to the flesh, seemed poor and inadequate when viewed in the light of the wondrous revelations which he made to the world.

The questions put by those who heard Jesus Christ show—(1) That even the greatest speakers cannot escape *personal* criticism. It is often suggested that earnest men succeed in drawing the attention of their hearers to the doctrine rather than to the speaker, but the life of Christ is a proof to the contrary; (2) That prejudiced hearers will sacrifice the *truth* because of the objectionableness of the *instrument* through which it is conveyed; (3) That such hearers actually *dishonour* God in their attempt to exalt him, because they deny his power to turn the humblest, poorest agency to the highest uses.

This incident may be treated as showing some of the difficulties of the christian ministry:—(1) The difficulty of *locality*,—Jesus was now in "his own country"; (2) The difficulty of *personality*,—ancestry, appearance, poverty, earnestness considered as indicative of presumption, all enter into this difficulty of personality. There is a still deeper truth underlying this difficulty:—*Individuality* of spirit, claim, manner, always provokes criticism. The glory of the highest revelation of christianity is that *personality* is superseded by *spirituality*. The speaker is to be forgotten in the speech. When both personality and doctrine are to be considered, the danger is that the former may be made to assume undue prominence. Instead of enquiring *What* is said? the enquiry will be *Who* said it? Personality is a mere question of *de-*

tail in comparison with the *truths* which nourish and save the soul.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

(1) Jesus Christ taking his stand upon a great principle; (2) Jesus Christ claiming his prophetic character in the face of opposition.

This answer may be regarded as showing the true method of encountering difficulties and dealing with opponents. Jesus Christ might have defended his relatives against the sneers of the critics. He might also have availed himself of the *tu quoque* argument, and shown how little reason his censors had to make remarks about his social connections. Were the servants inspired with the spirit of the Master, they would show corresponding independence and courage. It is remarkable that the people should have so boldly condemned any part of Christ's ministry when they daily saw how great was his power in working miracles. They never, so far as can be discovered from the narrative, show any fear of his wonderful *power*. They appear to have treated him with as much freedom and insolence as if he had never shown his almighty influence over the laws of nature.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

This statement (1) refutes the notion that where there is a true ministry there will be great success; (2) shows the tremendous difficulties which the human will can oppose to the highest purposes of God; (3) justifies the true worker in leaving the sphere in which he has been unsuccessful, to carry on his work under more favourable circumstances. The sphere has much to do with the development of the man. It is unreasonable to teach that a minister can be equally useful in all places. This remark must not be abused by the supposition that because a man cannot get on where he *is*, that he would infallibly get on somewhere else. Only in so far as Christ has called him to do his work will it be true of him that he will find a sphere in which he can work successfully.

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

(1) Christ the originator of missionary effort; (2) Christ the source of missionary power; (3) Christ the provider of missionary wants. There is no detail too minute to escape the notice of the Master. He does not teach carelessness,—he encourages dependence. It would be an abuse of the spirit of the text to insist that missionaries in our own day should go forth exactly according to these literal instructions. When the *church* is rich, the *missionary* should not be made an example of poverty. When the church is *poor*, the missionary who has Christ's spirit in him will not be deterred by a prospect of hard endurance. The one vital question relates not to the outward circumstances but to the *spirit* in which missionary work is undertaken.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, February 23, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-EIGHTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE INVOCATION.

Almighty God, Thou grantest unto men dreams and visions of the night which to them are perplexing, because without interpretation; and lo! Thou dost come in the course of life, and show how much of Thy purpose and Thy love has been prefigured by dreams of the night, teaching us how wide is Thy universe and how wonderful is Thy way of governing Thy creatures. Enable us to remember distinctly, and with moral effect, that the night is Thine as well as the day, and that Thou hast many paths of entrance into the human soul. Help us to believe that, whether Thou dost come in this way or that, Thou comest with purposes of redemption, with all love, and with all wisdom; and that our part is simply to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Give us the hearing ear and the understanding heart, the child-like spirit and the obedient will, that whensoever Thou dost come unto us we may meet Thee with the welcome of our love and with all the peacefulness of misgiving trust. We thank Thee for the goodness of to-day, for the sanctuary of God in the midst of the city, for the altar of grace set beside the altar of Mammon. Break the dominion of all evil powers; depose all unworthy gods; break up the empire of evil influences, and set within us in all its glory and beauty and hopefulness the kingdom of Thy dear Son, whose right it is to reign, seeing he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He might redeem us with His precious blood and recover those who have wandered from Thy sway. Unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as One God, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, world without end. Amen.

JOSEPH'S DREAM.

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh."—Genesis, xxxvii., 19.

WE learn from this verse how prejudice shuts us up to one particular view of man; the view which is most distasteful to us, and upon which we persuade ourselves, we can remark with the justice of injury and anger. Joseph was the child of his father's old age, the idol of the old man's heart, the light of the household,—and yet his brethren had got one view of him to which they could never close their eyes. He was nothing to them but a dreamer of unpalatable dreams, a seer of visions which more or less impaired their own dignity and clouded their own prospects. It is the same to-day. Envy never changes. Prejudice never modifies into a virtue. To-day we do not like the dreamers who have seen visions which involve us more or less in decay and inferiority. It is not easy to forgive a man who has dreamed an unpleasant dream concerning us. We cannot easily forgive a man who has founded an obnoxious institution. If a man has written a book which is distasteful to us, it is no matter, though he should do ten thousand acts which ought to excite our admiration and confirm our confidence, we will go back and back upon the obnoxious publication, and whensoever that man's name is mentioned that book will always come up in association with it. Is this right? Ought we to be confined in our view of human character to single points, and those points always of a kind to excite unpleasant, indignant, perhaps vindictive, feelings? The world's dreamers have never had an easy lot of it. Don't let us imagine that Joseph was called to a very easy and comfortable position when he was called to see the visions of Providence in the time of his slumber. God speaks to men by dream and by vision, by strange scene and unexpected sight; and we who are prosaic groundlings are apt to imagine that those men who live in transcendental regions, who are privileged occasionally to see the invisible, have all the good fortune of life, and we ourselves are but servants of dust and hirelings of an ill-paid day. No: the poets have their own pains, the dreamers have their own peculiar sorrows. Men of double sight often have double difficulties in life. Don't let us suppose that we are all true dreamers. Let us distinguish between the nightmare of dyspepsia and the dreams of inspiration. It it is not because a man has had a dream that he is to be hearkened unto. It is because the dream is a Parable of Heaven that we ought to ask him to speak freely and fully to us concerning his wondrous vision, that we may see further into the truth and beauty of God's way concerning man.

"Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."—20.

After this profound scheme no doubt there would follow a chuckle of triumph. The thing was so lucky in its plan, in its seasonableness,

in its practicability; it seemed to meet every point of the case; it made an end of the whole difficulty; it turned over a new leaf in the history of the family. Let us understand that our plans are not good simply because they happen to be easy. Let us understand that a policy is not necessarily sound because it is necessarily final. There is an evil policy in brevity as well as wit. In the case before us we see both the power and weakness of men. Let us slay,—there is the power; and we will see what will become of his dreams,—there is the weakness. You can slay the dreamer, but you cannot touch the dream. You can poison the preacher, but what power have you over his wonderful doctrine? Can you trace it? Where are its footprints? Ten or twelve men have power to take one lad, seventeen years of age, to double him up, and throw him, a dead carcase, into a pit. Wonderful power! What then? "And we will see what will become of his dreams." A word which, perhaps, was spoken in scorn, derision, or under a conviction that his dreams would go along with him. Still, underlying all the derision is the fact, that though the dreamer has been slain the dream remains untouched. The principle applies very widely. You may disestablish an institution externally, politically, financially, but if the institution be founded upon truth the Highest himself will establish her. If we suppose that by putting out our puny arms and clustering in eager crowds round the ark of God, we are the only defenders of the faith and conservers of the Church,—then be it known unto us that our power is a limited ability, that God himself is the life, the strength, the defence, and the hope of his own kingdom. The principle, then, has a double application,—an application to those who would injure truth, and an application to those who would avail themselves of forbidden facilities to maintain the empire of God amongst men.

"And we will say some evil beast hath devoured him." It is convenient in life to have even a beast that you can lay the blame upon. Life would be to some of us very insipid if we could not blame somebody for every evil word we say and every evil thing we do. "Some evil beast hath devoured him." We are unkind to beasts. We say, in our highly figurative words, if a man is intoxicated to a given point, that "he is as drunk as a beast." I should like to hear the beast's opinion about that. I never heard of a beast pawning anything that belonged to him that he might drink brandy and drink his powers away. No beast can be so bad as a bad man. There is no tiger in the forest that can be so savage as a pitiless mother. There is no wolf that ever came down upon a fold that can be so terrible, awful in passion, in malignity, and in evil deed, as a man who has lost self-control and is carried away by his lawless passions.

"And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him: that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."—22.

We must not be harsh upon Reuben in this connection, although the Reubens of society are often difficult men to deal with. Instead of coming right to the front and speaking the decisive word, they avail

themselves of some intermediate course, so that their very virtue becomes diluted into a kind of vice. When a man has not the courage of his convictions, his convictions may even become a temptation to himself and a stumblingblock to society. Reuben's intention was good, and let all due credit be given to every man who has a good intention, a merciful object in view. No one of us has a word to say against such a man. But there are times when everything depends upon tone, precision, definiteness, emphasis. I am not sure that Reuben could not have turned the whole company. There are times when one man can play with a thousand. A little one can put ten thousand to flight. Why? Because wickedness is weakness. There is more craven heartedness among bad men than ever you can find among men who are soundly, livingly good. Is that a hard message to some of you? You know a very bold wicked man. Well, so you do; but that man is a coward. One day the shaking of a feather will cause him to become pale, and to tremble and turn round suspiciously, and timidly, as if every leaf in the forest had an indictment against him and all the elements in the universe had conspired to destroy him.

Here is a call to us, most assuredly. We are placed in critical circumstances. Sometimes eight or nine men upon the board of directors have said that their plan will take this or that particular course. We believe that the plan is corrupt; we believe that it is wicked, displeasing to God, mischievous to man. What is our duty under circumstances such as these? To modify, to pare away, to dilute sound principle and intense conviction, to speak whisperingly, timidly, apologetically? I think not. But to meet the proposition with the definiteness of sound principle, and to be in that minority which in the long run is omnipotent—the minority of God. It is not easy to do this. Far be it from me to say that if I had been in Reuben's place I should taken a more emphatic course. We are not called upon, in preaching God's truth, to say what we would have done under such circumstances; but to put out that which is ideal, absolute, final, and then to exhort one another, to endeavour by God's tender mighty grace to press towards its attainment.

"And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt."—25.

There are times when circumstances seem to favour bad men. Some of us are accustomed to teach that circumstances are the voice of Divine Providence. There is a sense—a profound sense—in which that is perfectly true. God speaks by combinations of events, by the complications of history, by unexpected occurrences. Most undoubtedly so. We have marked this. In many cases we have seen their moral meaning, and have been attracted to them as to the cloudy pillar in the day time and the fire by night. At the same time there is another side to that doctrine. Here in the text we find circumstances evidently combining in favour of the bad men who had agreed to part with their brother. They sat down to eat bread,—perfectly tranquil, social amongst themselves, a rough hospitality prevailing. Just as they sat

down to enjoy themselves with their bread they lifted up their eyes, and at that very moment a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels. What could be more providential? They came in the very nick of time. The brethren hadn't to go up and down hawking their brother, knocking at door after door to ask if anybody could take him off their hands; but at the very moment when the discussion was pending and anxiety was at white heat, these circumstances so combined and converged as to point out the way of Providence and the path of right. Then we ought to look at circumstances with a critical eye. We ought first to look at moral principles and then at circumstances. If the morality is right, the eventuality may be taken as an element worthy of consideration in the debate and strife of the hour. But if the principles at the very base are wrong, we are not to see circumstances as divine providences, but rather as casual ways to the realisation of a nefarious intent. Let us be still more particular about this. I do not deny that these Ishmaelites came providentially at that identical moment. I believe that the Ishmaelites were sent by Almighty God at that very crisis, and that they were intended by him to offer the solution of the difficult problem. But it is one thing for us to debase circumstances to our own use and convenience, and another to view them from God's altitude and to accept them in God's spirit.

"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?"—26.

The very brightest and luckiest idea of all. He touched human nature to the very quick when he said, What profit is it? And instantly they seemed to convict themselves of a kind of thickheadedness, and said one to another, "Ah, to be sure, why no profit at all. Here is an opportunity of selling him, and that will turn to the account of us all. Sell is as short a word as slay. Sell! that will get clear of him. Let us sell. Sell! we shall have no blood upon our hands. Then we shall, perhaps, have a couple of shekels a-piece, and tossing them up in the air an inch or so, and catching them again, and hearing their pleasant chink. This is the plan, to be sure. This is the way out of the difficulty. We are sorry we ever thought of shedding blood; we shake ourselves from all such imputations. Let us sell the lad, and there will be an end of the difficulty." Selling does not always take a man out of difficulty. Bargain-making is not always satisfactory. There is a gain that is loss; there is a loss that is gain. There is a separation that takes the hated object from the eyes, yet that object is an element in society and in life—working, penetrating, developing—and it will come back again upon us some day with greater power, with intensified poignancy; and the man that was driven away from us a beggar and a slave may one day rise up in our path, terrible as an avenger, irresistible as a judgment of God. Well, his brethren were content. Men even say that they enjoy a very great peace, and therefore that if circumstances are tolerably favourable, they say that on the whole they feel in a good state of mind. Therefore they conclude that they have not been doing anything very wrong. Let us understand that vice may have a

soporific effect upon the conscience and judgment; that we may work ourselves into a state of mind as to place ourselves under circumstances that are factitious, unsound in their moral bearing, however enjoyable may be their immediate influence upon the mind.

I am struck by this circumstance, in reading the account which is before me, namely,—How possible it is to fall from a rough kind of vice, such as "let us slay our brother" into a milder form of iniquity, such as "let us sell our brother," and to think that we have now actually come into a state of virtue. That is to say, *selling* as contrasted with *slaying* seems so moderate and amiable a thing, as actually to amount to a kind of virtue. Am I understood upon this point? We are not to compare one act with another and say, Comparatively speaking this act is good. Virtue is not a quantity to be compared. Virtue is an indeclinable quantity. Comparing themselves with this they became wise. This kind of comparison has given place to the proverb that there is "honor among thieves." That is impossible. The thievish man will have a thievish honor. Brethren, it is true still, and will ever remain true, that unless we are right at the base, unless we can set our motives, purposes, intentions, in the full blaze of God's holiness, we shall become the victims of phrases, we shall be deluded by appearances. We debase circumstances into teachers of God's providences, which were meant to be warnings, threatenings, and judgments. Then against comparative morality and comparative virtue we are called upon to protest. I know how easy it is, when some very startling proposition has been before the mind, to accept a modified form of the proposition, which in itself is morally corrupt; and yet to imagine, by the very descent from the other point, that we have come into a region of virtue. Let me show you what I mean—in another department of life—by dropping from the greater to the less. A farmer went to his landlord and said—knowing him to be a stingy, niggardly man, as all landlords are bound to be up to a given point—"Will you build me a stable?" "Will I build you a stable! No, nothing of the kind; can't think of such a thing." "Well," said the farmer, "will you put me up a gate in the far field?" "Oh, yes, yes; put up a gate—that's a different thing altogether." Now, the farmer in the first instance wanted no stable. It would have been an inconvenience to have had a stable; but he knew that if he had in the first instance made the request for the gate he would have received exactly the same response which was given about the stable. So when men say, "Let us slay our brother," there is a little shuddering in society. We don't want to slay our brother. "Well, then," says an acute man, "let us sell him." And instantly, amiable christian people say, "Aye, aye, this is a very different thing; yes, let's sell him." Observe, the morality is not changed, only the point in the scale has been lowered. When God comes to judge he will not say, Is this virtue and water? is this diluted vice? But, Is this right? is this wrong? The standard of judgment will be the holiness of God.

Now the brethren had to account for what they had done. They had to make a case, and case-making is a very difficult business if you are wrong in your morality. There is a good deal of stuccoing and

veneering, angling and patching, and stitching and arranging to be done. We shall say some evil beast hath devoured him, we will dip his coat in the blood of a goat and say, Judge whether this be thy son's or not? Yes, men will one day have to account for the things which make up their life. "We will say,"—there is the point. Bad men have to argue upon what they were going to say. Bad men could never afford to be inconsistent and discrepant in their statements. Bad men have to get together and rub off corners and rectify angles and agree upon methods of transition from this point to that point. Twelve honest men have never to get together that they may agree upon this statement and the next plan. They may go one after another and be judged alone, and each tell his own story. And when the twelve statements have been made, there will be little discrepancies, points of inconsistency; and yet all these admit of being wrought up into an impressive consistency, because the base alone is true, and the intention of each witness is good. Forty or fifty bad men would never have written such a Bible as we have. It would have been a smoother Bible; there would not have been those apparent discrepancies and inconsistencies; it would have been a smooth, easy-flowing, consistent narrative. Observe, there is a consistency which is suspicious. There is a disagreement which is only the outcome of a healthy, loving, true, devout nature.

But we have to account how things happen. "We will say,"—there is the point. Now, what shall we say when we go to give an account of our whole life, if so be that we are not right at the very last? We have yet to have an interview with God. According to the teaching of this book, we do not pass away into the dark unknown without having intercourse with the great wonderful Power that made us and appointed us our places. We have to be called in as members of the household, and each one to tell his own tale, to put his his own view of his history before Almighty God. Now, is it not worth while our enquiring what we shall say at last? Remember the man who came with one talent, and who said, "I was afraid." Remember the man who endeavoured to make out that God was the blame for it all. The man said, "I knew that thou wast a hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, gathering where thou hadst not strawed, and I went and hid thy talent in the earth." A poor speech,—a poor account of life to give that! But what shall we have to say at the very last? "No minister of Christ ever spoke to me." If that were true one hour since, it never can be true again. If you live ages upon ages upon the earth you never can say from this moment, "No minister of Christ ever spoke to me about the salvation of life and the accountability of being." "We had not time?" Then how did you spend your time? "We had no capacity to understand." Then you blame God for the intricacy of his revelation and the difficulty of his call. "We were too bad to be saved." Did you never hear that Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin? "There is a fountain open in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." You heard the words? Yes. What did you make of them? Did you really and truly, deeply and earnestly, consider them? Did you press them to give up to you their whole meaning? I wish to say, with all distinctness, with all heart, that having looked all round the sinner's

position, so far as I am able to do, I cannot find a single point at which he can stand and challenge God to fair controversy. I can understand the urgency, the terrific force, of the enquiry, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" That I can understand. But how a man can flatter himself, after having spoiled his life, lived a slave to the devil, he can yet show Almighty God a good reason for doing so, I can't comprehend. Blessed are those of you who can go to God and say, "Though my life has been in many cases weak, poor, frail, blundering and wrong; yet, I have earnestly desired to live in the spirit and to walk in the light of Jesus Christ." It is not because we are perfect men that we shall be at the last saved and brought into God's sanctuary; but because, weak, guilty, and helpless sinners, we have cast ourselves on the Cross of Christ, the only-begotten, the well-beloved Son of God. Will any of you do this to-day? I am getting anxious about these services now, that we should see some result of one's labour in this direction. Will any man say, "Up to this moment I have liked a life of envy, prejudice, weakness. I have tampered with conscience, and with law, I have been unfaithful to God and to truth, and to all the better instincts of my own nature. But if there is a way of salvation, God helping me, I will find it to-day." Were one soul to say that, there would be joy in the presence of the angels of God.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 2nd, 1871.

(THE SIXTY-NINTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

GOD'S ABILITY.

"Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."—Ephesians, iii., 20.

THE apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, expresses himself with a redundance of thankfulness and appreciation which shows the wonderful depth and richness of his nature. He does not mete out his words as if by constraint. He lavishes his heart upon his theme, and, with holy impatience, he urges word upon word, description upon description, that he may give some faint hint at least of the sublimity by which he is dazzled and of the joy which lifts him almost to heaven. In the third chapter we find such expressions as these :—"The unsearchable riches of grace," "the manifold riches of God," "the riches of his glory," "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Never was language so inadequate to express the thought which inspired his mind, and which threw his heart into ecstacies of inconceivable and unutterable delight. The christian mediation seemed constantly to enlarge upon the vision of the apostle. It

was never to him a diminishing quantity. Every day he saw in the scheme of the Christian redemption some new point of light—felt in it some new pulse of eternal love. Hence it is a most stimulating and instructive study to follow the intellectual and spiritual development of Paul, to find how he grew in grace and knowledge and wisdom,—yet how at the very last he said, "I count not myself to have attained." Beyond the giddy peak on which he stood there were sublimer heights, and he pressed towards the mark, if haply he might scale those glittering heavenly steeps. In the text he seemed utterly at a loss to express the fulness of his conception of the grandeur, the riches, the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. We shall miss the force of these words unless we understand the prayer in connection with which they were uttered. The apostle, you observe, does not give this text as I have given it, namely, as a detached sentence. It is the culmination of a statement; it is something that comes after a serious, anxious effort which he himself has made; and we must look into the preliminary statement if we would know how Paul was dazzled, overwhelmed, made speechless by the infinite capacity of God to transcend all mortal prayer and all finite imagination. The apostle has been uttering a prayer which reads thus:—"That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man,—able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,—able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask: That ye being rooted and grounded in love,—Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask: May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,—Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask: That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God,—Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask." Reading the prayer in this manner, using the text as a kind of refrain to each petition, and each petition itself seeming to exhaust the very mercy and love of God, we get some notion of the apostle's conception of God's infinite wealth, infinite grace, and infinite willingness to give. Understand, then, that in coming to God and availing ourselves of the doctrine of this text, it is incumbent upon us that we should specify what we want from God. A man of flippant speech, of thoughtlessness of mind, may say, "I have asked God for *all*. Is he able to do exceeding abundantly above that?" Yes, because no man knows what "all" means. The dewdrop has its little all. The Atlantic has its idea of all; and the great star-laden firmament, arching over all things underneath it, has a wider representation still. A man such as I have described may say, "I have asked God for infinite blessings. Is God able to do exceeding abundantly above *infinite*?" Yes, as you use the word, because you don't know what infinite means. You only have your own little notion about it, and your inch cannot measure the infinitude of God. But apart from that answer, we are to protest against the doctrine that men when they come to God in prayer are to use such words as "all," "everything," "infinitude," without specification of their wants. We must tell God our necessities, interpret to him our hunger

and our thirst of soul. We must go to him with particular, well-defined, and urgently-pleaded petitions.

Perhaps this may be difficult of realization to some minds. I must therefore set it in a lower light. Suppose that a number of petitioners should go to the legislature with a petition worded thus: "We humbly pray your honourable house to do everything for the nation, to take infinite care of it, to let the affairs of the nation tax your attention day and night, and lavish all your resources upon the people." Suppose that a petition like that should be handed into the House of Commons, what would be the fate of it? It would be laughed down, and the only reason, the only good reason, why the petitioners should not be confined to Bedlam would be, lest their insanity should alarm the inmates. That is not a petition. It is void by generality; by referring to *all* it misses everything. You must specify what you want when you go to the legislature. You must state your case with clearness of definition, and with somewhat of argument. If it be so in our social, political prayers, shall we go to Almighty God with a vagueness which means nothing, with a generality which makes no special demand upon his heart. Read the text in the light of the gospel, and you will see the fulness of its glory, so far as it can be seen by mortal vision. Ask anything of God and I am prepared to quote these words of the text in reply. What will you ask? Let us in the first instance ask what we all want—whatevermay be our condition, age, circumstances. Let us ask for pardon. Is your prayer God forgive my sins? Now you may apply the apostle's words: "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask." You cannot conceive God's notion of pardon. You have an idea of what you mean by forgiveness; but when you have exhausted your own notion of the term forgiveness, you have not shown the divine intent concerning the soul that is to be forgiven. When God forgives, he does not merely pardon, barely pardon,—he does not by some great straining effort of his love, just come within reach of the suppliant, and lay upon his heart the blessing which is besought. He pardons with pardons! He multiplies to pardon! When he casts our sins away, it is not into a shallow pool, it is into the depths of the sea; when he throws it away, it is not on one side, it is *behind* him. Will you arithmeticians measure the distance which is meant by *behind the infinite?* When God takes a man's sins away from him, he puts them as far from him as the east is from the west. Can you tell how far the east is from the west? It is an expression that is often upon your lips. Have you ever measured the distance? You can't, it is an immeasurable line. So, when God comes to pardon us, he does not merely pardon, just pardon, by the very uttermost possibility pardon, but he pardons with pardons, with pardons again and again, wave upon wave, until we say, "Thou hast done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask." You see the finite can never grasp the infinite, and our poor mortal capacities cannot hold God's idea of pardon. We have, thank God, some notion of forgivness; but not until you yourself—as, blessed be God, most of us I trust have—not until you have entered personally into the mystery of this forgiveness, can you understand or have any hint of the depth of the

sea into which God has cast the sins of which we have repented. What will you ask for now? Ask for sanctification. Is your prayer sanctify me body, soul, and spirit? Then I am ready once more to quote you the apostle's text: "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." What is your notion of sanctification? You have thought about it: it is soon exhausted. When you leave reason and get into the region of fancy, your imagination soon wearies, and the description which you give of holiness is after all a negative description. When I read of God's holiness, I read of holiness that is glorious. God is said to be glorious in holiness. Do you understand the emphasis of that redundance? Holiness would have been a great word to have said concerning him, but when you add glorious in holiness—

> "Imagination's utmost thought
> In wonder dies away."

We know the meaning of innocence; we know what is implied by the terms not guilty; we can describe negatively a high condition of character. But God's notion of sanctification! When we have made our notion of sanctification clear and plain he sets his own holiness besides it, and in contrast our purity of development, and our sublimest moral acquisitions become corrupt in the presence of the blazing glory of the divine purity. This is our destiny if so be we are in Jesus Christ. Holiness is not something we can describe with sufficiency of terms. It is not a quantity we can see in its completeness. We cannot walk round about it and say, This is the limit thereof. There is always another ray of splendour which we have not seen, and a brighter beam of the ineffable effulgence which has not yet struck upon our vision. So when we ask God to sanctify us, we are to remember that he is is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Now, if this be so, it ought to stimulate us in all saintly progress, to inspire us in the study of divine truth, to recover our jaded energies, and tempt, lure, and draw us by the mighty compulsion of inexhaustible reward. This is the peculiar glory of Christian study, that it does not exhaust the student. His weakness becomes his strength. At sunset he is stronger than at sunrise; because Christian study does not tax any one power of the mind unduly. It trains the whole being, the imagination, the fancy, the will, the emotion; lifts up the whole nature equally, with all the equability of complete power,—not by snatches and spasms of strength, but with the sufficiency, breadth, and compass of power which sustains the balance always. This ought to rebuke those of us who imagine we have finished our christian education. I believe there are some persons in the world who are under the impression that they have finished God's book. They say they have "read it through." There is a poor sense in which it may be read through; but there is a deeper, truer sense in which we can never get through the Book of God. It is an inexhaustible study,—new every day, like morning light. You have seen splendour before, but until this morning you never saw this light. So it is with this great wonderful Book of God in the study of it. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The hoariest-headed student amongst us this morning who has spent his

days in study, and his nights in prayer, will be the first and most emphatic to declare, that the more he has dwelt upon the wonderfulness of God's revelation the more and more wonderful it has become to all the highest powers of his nature.

Here then is a stimulus, a spur to progress, a call to deeper study. We think we have attained truth. We have not attained all that is meant by the word truth. No man who knows himself and who knows God will say that he has been led into all the chambers of God's great palace of truth. This is the sign of progress; this is the charter of the profoundest humility. The more we know the less we know. We see certain points of light here and there, but the great unexplored regions of truth stretch mile on mile beyond all our power to traverse the wondrous plain. How is it with us to-day then? Are we fagged men, exhausted students? Do we sit down under the impression that there is nothing more to be known? If we have that idea let us seek to recover our strength and to recover our inspiration by the word,—He is able to do exeeeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. There are attainments we have not made, depths we have not sounded, and heights, oh, heights! We can but look up and wonder, expect, adore. If this be so, we ought to look calmly, with a feeling of chastened triumph, upon all hinderances, difficulties and obstacles in the way of Christ's kingdom upon the earth. We may look at these in relation to our own puny strength, and quail before them. But, we are not to depend upon our own resources, but upon God's, in attempting the removal of everything that would intercept the progress of his holy kingdom in the world. There is a great mountain: I cannot beat it down, all the instruments I can bring to bear upon it seem utterly powerless. But God touches the mountains and they smoke. The Alps, the Appennines, the Pyrennees, and great Himalayas, shall go up like incense before him, and his kingdom shall have a smooth uninterrupted way. There are combinations which I cannot disentangle. Conspiracies of the heathen against God and his Son, political conspiracies, social combinations, of which I can make nothing as a poor solitary worker. I can but kneel down before them and pray God to show the greatness of his strength. In a peculiar manner he will touch the reason of such conspirators and they will become jabbering maniacs in a moment. Sometimes he will touch the speech of such conspirators, and they will not understand what they are saying to one another. Sometimes in passing by, he will touch the earth with his finger: silently it will open and swallow them up.

I say, in my hours of weakness, yonder is a stone which I cannot remove. If I could get clear of that obstacle all would be right; but the stone is heavy, the stone is sealed, the stone is watched. What can I do? I go up the hill wearily, almost hopelessly, and behold! the stone is rolled away, and on the obstacle there sits the angel of God. Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think! What then is our christian hope about the world? Look at ministers, look at missionaries, look at Sunday-school teachers, look at writers, look at all the efforts made for the progress of divine truth upon the earth. Then, on the other hand, look at all the Paganism that remains unsubdued; at the idol temples which debase

and corrupt the world; look at all the institutions that live upon the badness of the human heart! You say, the instrumentality is not equal to the work. You are right. The straw cannot beat the mountain into flying dust. The hand of man cannot crumble the great gigantic bulwarks behind which error has entrenched itself. You are quite right. But God hath chosen the weak things to throw down the mighty. It is not the straw that does it; it is the hand that wields it. Shakespeare dips his pen into the ink and writes Hamlet. I take up the same pen, dip into the same ink, but I can't write Hamlet. It is not the pen that does it; it is the writer. It is not the little instrumentality; it is the God who is able to do, and who has done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. It is therefore because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, that we now expect to triumph over the world, and speak of all nations as if they belonged to the Son of God. If the doctrine of the text be true, then it should fill all bad men with terror. We should regard this text as a two-sided text. We are always accustomed to regard it as affording comfort to the christian heart, strength to the toiling pilgrim who moves heavenward day by day. The text does supply all that is needful for the encouragement and strength of such. But it has a tremendous back-stroke. The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword—mighty for the gaining of victories, but terrible to those who feel its cutting power.

You have a certain notion of hell. We can't tell what is meant by that awful word. We speak of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. But what do we know about the words which involve so much? We can't tell what is meant by everlasting punishment. Modify the doctrine of hell as you please,—dilute the term "everlasting punishment" as you like,—avail yourselves of all the resources of etymology to the furthest possible extent, that you may reduce the limit and application of certain words;—when you have done all, it must remain a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! There are moments that are eternities. It is the nature of all pain to have itself described as an everlasting punishment. Inflict some wound upon yourself now, and the next hour will feel as if it were a day: you feel as if it would never, never pass away. It is of the nature of punishment to force itself upon the sufferer as everlasting penalty. Joy hath wings. Joy filling the hour, the hour flies away, and we say, It cannot be gone already! Yes. It is there we read the meaning of the words eternal life. Don't let us imagine that because we may have this notion or that peculiar or heterodox exception about the punishment that awaits the sinner, that therefore we have diluted the notion to nothing. When we have done our utmost in that direction, God is able to do exceeding abundantly all that we think. The oppressor says, "Well, if it has come to this I am prepared to bear it." No, you are not prepared to bear it! When I say it is this, I use human words in a human sense; but when God says it is this, I cannot tell all his meaning. When the poor man who has twelve shillings a week says that a certain person is rich, that is one meaning of the word rich. When the man who has ten thousand pounds a year speaks of the same individual, perhaps he might say he is poor. So

words have different meanings as used by different persons. Every man must be his own dictionary. You must look at the speaker before you can understand some speeches. You must look at the etymologist before you can understand the etymology. So when God says he will utterly destroy the wicked, remember that it is God who says so, and don't measure the word by your poor lexicography.

It may be difficult for some minds to follow the argument out spiritually; we must therefore descend to illustration. Here is a very clever artist, who has made a beautiful thing he brings before us, and we gather round it and say, "It is most exquisitely done. What is this, sir?" "That," replies the artist, "is my notion of a flower, and I am going to call that flower a rose." "Well, it is a beautiful thing,—very graceful, and altogether beautifully executed: you are very clever." So he is, and now that exhausts his notion of the rose. But let God just hand in a full-blown rose from the commonest garden in the world, and where is your waxen beauty? Underneath every leaf is written, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Let him just send the sweet spring morning in upon us, with the first violet, and all your artificial florists, if they have one spark of wit left, will pick up their goods and go off as soon as possible. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The meanest insect that flutters in the warm sunlight is a grander thing than the finest marble statue ever chiselled by the proudest sculptor.

Now we are going to have a very festive day. We are going to pluck flowers and fashion them into arches, and we shall make our arches very high, very beautiful,—and so far as the flowers go, they are most gorgeously and exquisitely beautiful. We have put up the wires; we have festooned these wires, and we say, "Now, is not that very beautifully done?" and of course, we who always drink the toast "our noble selves," say yes. But God has only to take a few rain-drops and strike through them the sunlight, and where are your past-board arches and your skilful working! He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. My fellow-students, in this holy mystery, believe me, as in nature, so in the higher kingdom of grace. As in matter he beats all your sculptors, and is in all schools infinitely superior to men, so in the revelation of truth to the heart, in the way of redeeming man from sin, in the way of sanctifying fallen corrupt human nature,—all your theorists and speculators, all your plaster dealers and social reformers and philanthropic regenerators, must get out of the way as artificial florists when God comes to us with the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley.

Then let us leave all inferior teachers and go straight to the Master himself. We have to deal with sin, and the only answer to sin, which answer is comprehended in one word, is the Cross. God's foolishness is better than our wisdom. God's weakness is infinitely superior to our strength. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." If you choose to make your own cisterns, broken cisterns, to hold no water, you may do so. Let others of us say, As for us and our house, we will go—poor, guilty, heart-thirsty sinners as we are—to the fountain of living

waters, and if we perish, we will pray and perish only there! No dead men have I ever found at that fountain. I have found ten thousand dead men by your ill-hewn cisterns. No dead man have I ever found with his hand on the Cross,—with his lips at the well of life.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, thy riches are unsearchable. The hosts of heaven are Thine, so are the gold and the silver and the cattle upon a thousand hills. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. As for Thy love it is boundless, and we will say with thy church in all ages, Thy mercy endureth for ever. We would therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and that we may find grace to help in time of need. Every time is a time of need. We humbly beseech Thee therefore to dwell with us. Abide in our heart as in a redeemed and chosen house. Save us in the hour of temptation! Deliver us from all evil influences! Establish our hearts in the love of Christ, that we may never depart from the living God. Grant unto us now to know somewhat of the fulness of thy love, the infinitude of thy nature, the depths of thy heart, the tenderness of thy compassion! May we be filled with amazement, overwhelmed by visions of thy glory, encouraged and strengthened by assurances of thy goodness. We abide near the cross; we lay our hands upon the one sacrifice for sin,—Jesus Christ, Son of Man and Son of God. As we look upon Him crucified, we say with all our heart, God be merciful unto us sinners! Prepare us now to wait upon thee with profitableness and joy. Shed upon us the light above the brightness of the sun. Assure us of thy nearness by the interpretation of thy blessed word to our anxious hearts and enquiring minds. May we see the Lord's beauty, and feel that the Lord's hand is upon us. Unto the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as one God, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, worldwithout end. Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 9th, 1871.

(THE SEVENTIETH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH'S CAPTIVITY.

"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither."—Genesis, xxxix., 1.

UP to this time we hear next to nothing of what Joseph himself said or thought about the peculiar, the romantic, and the distressing circumstances under which he was placed. It occurs to me, however, to call attention to one observation of his, omitted in our last reading. You remember that Joseph had two remarkable dreams, in both of which his own prospective supremacy was broadly indicated. He dreamed that all other sheaves bowed down before his sheaf. He dreamed, also, that the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to him; and yet, whilst these dreams were in his recollection, his father called to him and

proposed that he should go to see whether it was well with his brethren and well with the flocks. When Jacob made this proposition, the dreaming, the prospectively great man, instantly, humbly, with filial simplicity and love, answered, "Here am I." There is a lesson, in this reply, to some of you young men, perhaps, who have dreams of future greatness,—who see sheaves falling down before your sheaf, and see the hosts of heaven making obeisance to you. Meanwhile, if you are children, obey your parents in the Lord. If you are servants, do the day's work, not with the hireling's niggardliness, but with a servant's noble trust, with self-expenditure, with an attention which commands confidence, and with a diligence that ought to merit reward. It is always a great pity when a man's dreams destroy his strength for practical work and his interest in the affars that are round about him. No man can live healthily on dreams. If the dreamer be not superior to his dreams, in the meantime, then he will become the victim of fancies; he will be led about under the enchantment of the most mocking delusions; and he who might, by humbly, patiently, and nobly waiting, have become a great man, will subside into common-place, and leave no recollection for which the world or his friends in particular will thank him.

This is nearly all that we hear of Joseph's own speech. Up to this time he has been to a large extent silent. In the verse before us we hear nothing of his thoughts or of his speech. How is this? The deepest things in life are never told. When men are in their greatest sorrows they are often also in the deepest silence. There are crises in life when we cannot speak,—we are stunned, overwhelmed, dismayed. We look almost vacant to observers whose eyes are upon us. They cannot understand our speechlessness; whilst they themselves are under such great excitement, they wonder at our passivity. There is an excitement that is passive; there is a passion that is latent; there is a vehemence of feeling which is often kept under restraint. Men misunderstand us because, in our sorest experiences, we do not exclaim aloud, we do not protest against the injury which is being inflicted upon us: we are led off in silence, and we seem to justify those who injure us by want of protest and argument and vehement denial of the justice which is being accorded to us. Learn that there is a sublimity of silence. There are two ways of enduring the wrongs of life. An exclamatory, effusive, protesting style of endurance; and a silent, calm, dignified endurance of trial, scourge, injury, injustice, wrong. The quiet man has suffering as well as the stormy man; and not always those who protest most loudly feel most keenly the impression which the iron is making on their souls.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."—2.

There are many ways in which the Lord is with a man. Not always by visible symbol; seldom by an external badge which we can see and read. God is with a man in the suggestion of thought; in the animation of high, noble, heavenly feeling; in the direction of his

steps; in the direction of his speech, enabling him to give the right look, the right answer at the right time under the right circumstances; giving him the schooling which he could never pay for, training him by methods and processes unknown in human schools, and not to be understood except by those who have past under them. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." Ideas are the gifts of God, as well as wheat fields and vineyards and other fruits of the earth. Suggestions in business, delivering thoughts in the time of extremity, silence when it is better than speech, speech when it will do more than silence. "These also come forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." The Lord was with Joseph and yet Joseph was under Potiphar. These are the contradictions and anomalies of life which ill-taught souls can never understand, and which become to them mysteries which torment their spirits and which distract their love. Undoubtedly this is an anomalous state of life: Joseph brought down to Egypt by his purchasers,—Joseph sold into the house of Potiphar,—bought and sold and exchanged like an article of merchandise. Yet, he was a prosperous man! Understand that there are difficulties which cannot impair prosperity, and that there is a prosperity which dominates over all external circumstances and vindicates its claim to be considered a divine gift. Looking at this case through and through, one would say, it is hardly correct to assert that Joseph was a prosperous man, when he was to all intents and purposes in bondage, when he was the property of another, when not one hour of his time belonged to himself, when he was cut off from his father and from his brethren. Yet, it is distinctly stated that, notwithstanding these things, the Lord was with him and he was a prosperous man.

There must be a lesson for some of us here. When men live in their circumstances they never can be prosperous. When a man has to go out into his wheat-field to know whether there is going to be a good crop before he can really enjoy himself,—that man does not know what true joy is. When a man has to read out of a bank-book before he dare take one draught out of the goblet of happiness,—that man's thirst for joy will never be slaked. Man cannot live in wheat-fields and bank-books and the things of the present world. If he cannot live within himself, in the very sanctuary and temple of God, then he is at the sport of every change of circumstance,—one shake of the telegraph wire may unsettle him, and the cloudy day may obscure his hopes and darken what little soul he has left. If Joseph had lived in his external circumstances he might have spent his days in tears and his nights in hopelessness; but living a religious life, living with God, walking with God, identifying his very soul's life with God, then the dust had no sovereignty over him, external circumstances were under his feet. This is the solution of many of our difficulties. Given a man's relation to God and you have the key of his whole life. If that relation be disturbed, unequal, distracted, unsatisfactory, never bringing light and peace unto his heart and mind, then whatsoever prosperity (so called) may attend his outward life, it is but a gilded coating which will be worn off by time, and which cannot stand the test of the greatest crises of life. Understand then, my dear young fellow-students in particular, how possi-

ble it is to be an exile, a slave, cut off from father and mother and home and friendship, and yet to be a prosperous man. The man lies deeper than the slave. The christian is, so to speak, higher than the man. He who has the bread of heaven to eat spends his life in the very banqueting-house of God.

"And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand."—3.

There is something about a religious man that is not to be found about any other man. Pagans can see whether God is with us. Heathens and idolatrous men have some notion of our religious position, our religious thinking, our religious relationships. Potiphar knew nothing about the true God, yet saw in this fair-faced youth something he had not seen before. Such is the mysterious working of the higher life in a man. How did Potiphar see that the Lord was with Joseph? Because Joseph made long religious speeches to him whenever he had a spare hour? It is not said so here. Because Joseph wrote out in illuminated characters a brilliant religious creed? hung it up in his bedchamber, or bound it round his forehead? It is not said so in the text. Potiphar saw that the Lord was with him because all that he did prospered. You can only get at some minds through external phenomena, through circumstances, through evidence that appeals to the senses. It was not through the deepest religious things that Potiphar came to understand that the Lord was with Joseph; but reasoning from the outside to the interior, he came to the conclusion that, as a mysterious and unmingled prosperity attended everything this young man did, there was no solution for such a state of things but a religious solution. This man is the Lord's servant, and the Lord's crown of approbation rests upon his honoured head. How far is it possible to be any man's servant, and yet to conceal from that man that we know the true God? A nice problem in casuistry! How long may a man be in the warehouse of his employer, and his employer never have the dimmest conception that the man knows that there is so much as a God in the universe? Some of us have a very skilful way of concealing our religion. Perhaps you have been in the employment of your master seven years, and your master is surprised and startled to find that you are a member of a church, that you take the Lord's supper from time to time. Now, there ought to be ways of revealing the deepest life. We ought not to be all surface. There ought to be subtleties of expression, of movement, mysteries of conduct, which cannot be explained on any other ground than that we take our soul's law from the lips of the Eternal, and that we never do anything without first seeking the sanction and benediction of God. Oh, but some of us are exceedingly afraid of what we term cant! We can produce the evidences of our christianity without saying a word. You can't talk to some men without being the better, even for five minutes, in their company. It was said of one of our great English statesmen that you could not meet him under an arch during a rain shower without being impressed with the fact that he was

a remarkable man. We can understand that very well. There is influence in the expression of the countenance, in the glance of the eye, in the tone of the voice, in the little courtesies of life, in the small things which your prodigiously great men hold in contempt. Some men speak light. Some men bring with them the terribleness of judgment, when we are doing anything in their presence that is mean, sneaking, cowardly, unworthy of manhood. We feel, when they get round about us, that they are like a flame—piercing, scorching at every point. Yet they never preach to us, they never lecture to us, they never go over the points of their theology to us: still, it is as impossible to disbelieve their sincerity and nobility as it is to deny the shining of the sun at noonday.

Perhaps we ought to pause here to point out that prosperity of the kind to which Potiphar referred is not always granted to men in vindication of their christian sincerity and filial relation to God. Sometimes our manner of bearing adversity is the seal of our sonship: our patience under failure, our magnanimity in the line of trial, our hopefulness and chastened cheerfulness when the east wind is blowing and the clouds are thick and threatening. This may testify that we have learned of God. It is enough, therefore, to lay down this doctrine broadly, then: When a man loves the Lord and his ways please the Lord, there will be some opportunity of showing the man is not all surface, but that he has a deep true christian heart, that he is a child of God, a son of light.

"And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field."—5.

One man blessed for the sake of another. Here is a great law,—here is a special lesson for many. A man looks at his property, and reasons that he must be good, and approved of God, otherwise he never could have so many blessings in his possession. It never enters the man's mind that he has every one of these blessings for the sake of another man. The master blessed because he has a good servant! Would to God I could speak thunder-claps and speak lightning to many thousands in our city and throughout our land to-day upon this very matter! Here is a man, for example, who never enters a place of worship. No, no,—not he. His wife is a member of the church, and if ever she is five minutes late in on Sunday, his mighty lordship foams and fumes, and is not going to be put upon in this way, and have his household arrangements upset by these canting, fanatical, religious people. What shall I call him? The wretch, the almost-devil, owes every penny he has to his dishonoured praying wife. If that woman—the only angel in God's universe that cares for his soul—were to cease praying for him, God might rain fire and brimstone upon him and his dwelling-place. He does not know it. No! He is shrewd, cunning, wide-awake, has his eyes open, knows when the iron is hot and when to strike it, and he is such a wonderful genius in business. A maniac—not knowing that it is his praying wife that saves him from ruin, meanwhile from hell!

Here is another man who thinks it manly to blaspheme, swear, and use profane language upon every opportunity, and to ridicule religion and religious people. He knows that it is all wrong. He has revelations from the nasty little god that he worships that everybody in the world is all wrong but himself. And that man prospers! His fields are verdant in spring-time, his crops are rich and golden in autumn. If you speak a word to him about religion he laughs at you, and intimates, in a not very roundabout manner, that you are a fool. And he owes all he has to a little invalid girl, who believes in God and prays to him, and connects the house with Heaven! God blesses one man for the sake of another. The husband is blessed because of the godliness of the wife. The parent is honoured because of the christianity of the child. The strong man has prospered in his way because of the poor weak creature in his house who is mighty in soul towards God and truth. Yet these are the elements and the facts which are so often overlooked when men take stock and tell what they are worth. Ten men keep that brimstone-and-fire shower back. The righteous are the salt of the earth. The true, loving and God-fearing are the light of the world. But for them would God be patient with the world? What would it be, with his great power, to crush your little world, to pulverize and throw it away on the flying winds and forget it? It is Paul that saves the vessel on the stormy Adriatic. It is Joseph that blesses the house of Potiphar. It is the ten praying men that save the Sodoms of the earth from the lightning showers of judgment.

And this is God's plan all through. There is one man for whose sake all other men are blessed. This is the principle of mediation which runs through all the divine government of man. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father." When we go to God with the story of our sin and the cry of our penitence, we are heard, not for our own sake, but for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is the same principle,—the principle of interposition, the ministerial, mediational principle,—on which he conducts his government of human society. Does any poor guilty man wait to talk to God to-day then? Here is the instruction which I have for such a man. It will be for Christ's sake that God will hear you. And as long as Christ's name sanctifies and elevates your petitions you may pray on. There is no prayer long that gushes from the heart, that rises to God through the mediation of Christ.

After this Joseph had to encounter the great moral crisis of his life. He has already past over what I may term the social crisis, the physical crisis. He has come out of that crisis calm, strong, reliant upon God. And now the great temptation seizes him,—is aimed at him at least. Haply it cannot touch him. What is his answer to the temptation? This. God! And remember, my dear friends, there is no other true answer. When the tempter comes, when the enchantress stands there, what is the reply of the youth? God! And he is more than conqueror. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? A man must go back upon his religious principles when he is tempted; he must not try to prove to the individual in question that it is inexpedient, that it is wrong; he must not quote the example of the man

who has sinned before him. He must take wing, and get away to God! And from the height of God's throne he must answer the temptation, and when he does so he will be more than conqueror. What are we, if we have not struggled against evil,—if we have not proved our manhood, given to us of God, on the battle-field? You are tempted to put forth your hand and steal; and ere you touch the forbidden property, you thought of God and recoiled, and you are now the stronger man for temptation overcome. There are temptations in life—temptations at every turning of the street—temptations in all the evolutions of daily circumstances—temptations that come suddenly—temptations that come unexpectedly — temptations that come flatteringly. There is no true, all conquering, all triumphant answer to the temptation of the devil but this,—*God!* Be deep in your religion, have foundations that are reliable, know your calling, and God will protect you when the time of battle and storm and flood shall come. He will do it, if so be we put our trust in Him.

Brethren, what is the cure for all that we have seen in the case of Joseph that is bad? For the envy of brothers, the malice of those that ought to be our saintly protectors from all evil-mindedness, from all worldly passion, from all selfishness, from all prejudice? What is the cure? The cure is crucifixion with the Son of God! Except we be crucified with Christ we shall have no hidden power. Except we know the fellowship of His sufferings we shall be foiled in the day of attack. There is one life that touches all other life beneficently, benignly, redeemingly,—that is the life of Jesus Christ. To those who need the exhortation, let me say:—Read that life with an attention you have never bestowed upon it before, with special desire to know the meaning of that mysterious life, and you will see that there is no point of human experience which it does not touch. Nothing has been forgotten, nothing overlooked. All sin, weakness, shame, fear, greatness, littleness—all man—has been comprehended within the scheme of that life, and has been redeemingly touched by the mighty power of the Son of God, who is also God the Son. May our morning lesson be meat for the whole week!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, seeing that dark clouds and darkness are round about Thee, may we know of a surety, for our comfort and strengthening in all good things, that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne. Be Thou Thyself near to us, so that our weakness may itself become a source of strength, and so that every stroke of Thy rod may be sanctified to the well-being of our souls. We would regard all human life as a revelation of God. Work in us that quiet and saintly patience which humbly waits for the solution of all mysteries and the removal of high mountains which oppose our access to the perfect light of Thy presence. Be Thou Thyself the answer to every temptation that assails our heart. Be the defence of our peculiar weaknesses, and when sorrows thicken round us, do Thou give new interpretations of Thy love, that we may recover our faith and praise Thee with a louder, sweeter voice. We would walk all our days hand in hand with Jesus Christ. We would put our feet in His foot-prints. We would keep our eyes steadily fixed upon his Cross. There would we pray for the pardon of our sins, the sanctification of our nature, and the perfect redemption of our whole life! We gather round the Cross to-day. We are bound by its great attraction; and we take hope that our sins may be forgiven, because the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Put within us Thy Holy Spirit. Direct the way of our life from time to time. May we be humble, courageous, hopeful, child-like, patient with God and patiently waiting for God, lest by our impetuosity we interrupt Thy providences and divert the stream of Thy love. We need no other guide but Thee. In God we find redemption, justification, holiness, and all the blessings of a glorious destiny. Keep our hearts in this faith, then shall our life be strong and pure. Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 16, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-FIRST NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH IN PRISON.

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."—Genesis, xxxix., 20.

WE know enough of the history of Joseph, from the previous readings, to know that he was unworthy—he had not done anything worthy of—imprisonment and pain. Let us keep steadily in mind the fact that there are false accusations in human life. There is a tendency to believe charges against men without patiently and carefully going into particulars, without making such moral inquest into them as ought alone to justify our belief in any charge that may be made against a human creature. We are prone to say, when an accusation is lodged against a man, "After all there must be something in it." We reason that it is impossible to get up a charge against a man without that charge having, at least, some foundation. We think it charitable to add, "That probably it is not quite so bad as

it looks, yet after all there must be *something* in it." Here is a case in which that doctrine does not hold true at all. There is nothing in this but infamy. May it not be so amongst ourselves to-day? Has human nature changed? Are there not to-day tongues that lie, hearts that are inspired by spite? We are in danger, I think, of being very pathetic indeed over historical characters, and forgetting the claims of modern instances. There are people who will be exceedingly vehement in their pity for Joseph, who can say spiteful or unkind words about their neighbour who is labouring under an accusation quite as groundless and quite as malicious as that which ended in the imprisonment of Joseph. There are men who will preach eloquent sermons about the fall of the apostle Peter who will yet, in the most unchristian spirit, expel and anathematise brethren who have been overtaken in a fault. And the worst of it is, they are apt to think that they show their own righteousness by being very vehement against the shortcomings of other people.

Now, history is wasted upon us if we do but shed tears for the ill-used men of far-gone centuries. See how easy it is to do mischief! You insinuated against a certain man that there was something wrong in his case. You never can withdraw your insinuation. You lie against your fellow-creature, and then apologise. You can't apologise for a lie! Your lie will go where your apology can never follow it. And men who heard both the lie and the apology will, with a cowardice that is unpardonable, say, when occasion seems to warrant their doing so, "That they have heard that there was something or other about him, but they can't tell exactly what it was." So mischief goes on from year to year, and a lie is in the meantime more powerful than the truth. It is always easier to do mischief than to do good. Let us, then, be careful about human reputation. The character is the man. It is better to believe all things, hope all things, endure all things, in the interests of Christ's blessed charity, than to be very eager to point out even faults that do exist. There are men to-day who are suffering from accusations as false as the lie of Potiphar's wife. There are other men who have been sinned against by false accusations who have received withdrawments and apologies. But such, alas! is the state of so-called christian charity, that though we have a memory for the indictment, we have no recollection for what ought to have been a triumphant, all-inclusive and all-delivering vindication. Terrible is the state of that man who has a good memory for insinuations, charges, innuendoes, and bad suggestions, but no recollection for things that are beautiful, and healing, and redeeming and helpful. That man's destiny is to wither away into a devil.

"But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."—21.

What a poor compensation! The man's character is taken away, and the Lord gives him favour in the sight of a jailor! There are honours in life which are aggravations. My name is blasted, my home is broken up, my whole life is withered right away down into the roots, and on either side there is a turnkey somewhere who says he has great confidence in me! Why not have vindicated the man before Potiphar?

Why not have withered up the wretch that took away his dear fair name? That would have been compensation. If when the women's mouth had opened to tell the lie God had locked her jaw, that would have been vindication. Instead of that, Joseph has the wonderfully good luck of being thought well of by a jailor. This is the danger of our criticism. We mistake the process for the result. We rush at the semicolon as if it were a full stop. We judge God by the fraction, not by the integer. I am prepared to grant that if the whole scene had ended here—if this had really been the culminating point, the completion of the sad romance—the favour which Joseph received of his jailor would have been a mockery, and he might have thrown such favour back in the face of God, as a poor compensation for the injury which had gone like iron into his soul, for suffering which had destroyed his sleep and turned his days into wintry nights.

The difficulty of the critic is to be patient. He is so anxious to make a point that he often ruins himself by his own sagacity. He jumps in upon the way of God with such impetuosity that he has to spend the remainder of his days in apologising for his rudeness, his want of patient saintly dignity in waiting until God himself said, "It is finished." Still, the point of the favour accorded to Joseph by the jailor ought not to be forgotten in making up our own view of life, for this reason :—We shall redeem ourselves from much suffering, help ourselves towards a nobler, stronger, manlier endurance, by looking at the one bright point which remains in our life. Is there any life here that has in it no speck of light? Any day that has not in it one blue spot? What is the moral use and purpose of a glint of light and speck of blue? It is a reminder that there is still light; that the blue morning may come back again; and that God hath not—though the day be dark and cloudy and the wind be bitterly cold—forgotten to be gracious. Our honours may chafe us. We may reason from them that having so much we ought to have more. What we require, when such impatience has reached us, is a devout, urgent desire that God will tame our impetuosity, and teach us the sweet mystery and the mighty power of child-like waiting.

"And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound."—xl., 1—3.

No man liveth unto himself. There is a little fratch in the king's house, and, somehow or other, that will be linked with all these events that are transpiring a little way off. You run against a man in the dark; he remonstrates with you in a vexed tone, and in that vexed tone your hear the voice of your own long-lost brother. You go over the street without knowing what you have gone for, and you meet the destiny of your life. A child tells you its little dream, and that dream awakens some blessed memory which throws light upon some dark and frowning place in your life. Some people don't believe in dramas, not knowing that all life is an involved ever-moving, ever-evolving drama. Life is a composition of forces. It is a wet Thursday morning, and you

have nothing particular to do. You see people going up a certain gateway, and you say, "I think I'll go in, just to see what's going on." And there a man rouses your conscience, sets fire to some bad resolution and turns your heart towards the face of God. The chief butler gives Pharaoh the cup with a fly in it, and the chief baker spoils his baking. These things are to be added to some other things, and out of this combination there is to arise one of the most pathetic and beautiful incidents to be found in all the treasure-house of history. We do not know what is transpiring around us, and how we are to be linked on to collateral processes. There is a main line in our life; there are also little branch lines. You jostle against a man, and get into conversation with him, and learn from him what you would have given gold for had you known where it was to be found. Everything in life has a meaning. Mistakes have their meanings. Misunderstandings will often lead to the highest harmonies. No man can do without his fellow-men. It is a very sad thing indeed that we have to be obliged in any sense to a butler or a baker. But we can't help it. It is no good our attempting to shake out of the sack the elements we do not like. We cannot colonise ourselves in some fairy-land, where we can have everything just according to our pick and choice. The labourer in the streets, the child in the gutter, the poor suffering wretch in the garret,—all these, as well as your kings and priests, have to do with the grand up-making and mysterious total of the thing we call human life. God is always coming down to us through unlikely paths, meeting us unexpectedly, causing bushes to flame and become temples of His presence. We go out for our father's asses; we may return crowned men. There are some people who don't like religion because it is so mysterious, not knowing that their own life is a constantly-progressing mystery. Whenever they would deliver themselves from the presence of mystery they must deliver themselves from their very existence.

"And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison."—5.

The chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it. There are dreamers and there are dream interpreters. There are men who live by their ideas. Live! No; that was a slip of the tongue. Men who seem to be able to do nothing, and yet society could not get on without them. You see yonder fifty men building a great house, and there is a man standing amongst them with his hands in his pockets, and that awful thing, a "black coat" on. You say the fifty men are building the house, and a lazy kind of man is standing there with his hands in his pockets, and your notion of political economy is that such men ought to be put down. Well, put them down, and you will have no more building. The men that are standing there, apparently doing nothing, are the inspiration of the whole thing. Men in the world—poor, poor men—who have nothing but ideas! If they were to sell bricks, they would eventually retire into detached villas and croquet lawns. But, if they have nothing

but ideas, they retire into the workhouse. A man builds a bridge, and he is a great man; another man puts up a cathedral, and he too is a great man. I won't take away one iota from the just fame and honour of such men. We can't do without them. We should be poor if we hadn't such men amongst us. They are the glory of civilization. But is it nothing to give a man an idea that shall change his life? to tame the tiger heart and make it gentle as a lamb's? to put into man thoughts, and stir in him impulses, that shall heal him in his sorrows, chasten him in his joys, interpret to him the darkest problems of his life, and hold a light over his way when he passes into the wonderful dark Unknown?

The preacher does not build stone cathedrals. But does he not build temples not made with hands? He cannot take you out and say, "See these mighty stoneworks what I have done!" But he may be able, through God's mighty grace, to say, "Look at that man: once he was the terror of his neighbourhood, the torment of his family, and now he is a strong, pure, kind man." Is that nothing? Your stoneworks will crumble; time will eat up your pyramids. But this man, this soul, shall be a glorious unfading light when your world, and all the wondrous works upon it, shall be burned up. Be cheered then, preacher of the gospel, teacher of the young, obscure one who can only work in the family, giving direction to young thought and young feeling, dropping into the opening heart seeds of divine truth! Thou art doing a work which, though it can't be valued by any human figures or by any arithmetic, is prized, and shall be rewarded, by God, who is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and your labour of love.

Life is a dream, a riddle, a mystery, a difficult problem. But there is one Interpreter. What is his name? Where can he be found? His name is Jesus Christ, and he can be found wherever there is a heart that wants him. You have a dream—you cannot call it by any other name—about sin. You know there is something wrong somewhere. You can't explain it; you can't set it down in order, proposition after proposition. It is as unsubstantial as a dream and impalpable as a vision. Yet it haunts you, and you want to know more about it. Christ is the interpreter, and He alone can explain what sin is, show it in its reality, and give the soul to feel how terrible a thing it is. You have dreams about truth. Sometimes you see an image that you think is the very angel of truth herself. Sometimes that angel comes quite near you, and you are almost on the point of laying your hand on the glittering vision. You can't quite do so. It leaves you, escapes you, mocks you! Jesus Christ is the interpreter of that dream. He knows truth, he reveals truth, he sanctifies man by truth, he enriches the human mind with truth, and he alone has the truth. Why? Because he *is* the truth. It is one thing to have a truth. It is then a possession, something to be pointed out and described. It is another thing to *be* the truth. Christ himself had not the truth in our poor sense of the term, for he *was* the truth. He did not so much preach the gospel as *be* the gospel. You are conscious of glimmerings of objects, dreamings about better states of things. You have a moral nature that now and again gives you hints about right and wrong, and truth and falsehood. You have an imagina-

tion that will go out beyond the present and the visible. Are you content to be tormented and mocked by these dreamings, half visions, spectral revelations, and tempting fancies? Why not take them all up to the Son of God, and say, "We have dreamed this! We cannot make anything of its harmonies,—nothing truly beautiful. Yet we think it ought to be made into something beautiful, because look what glittering pieces there are here—what wondrous shapes, what marvellous adaptations we think there are to be found amongst these pieces." If you go up to Him so, He, more readily than ever Joseph or Daniel did, will show you the interpretation of the dream, and will bless you with revelations of what is in yourself as well as what is in God.

My dear friend, you can't get on without the interpreter of dreams, without the man of thought, without the inspired teacher, without the profound interpreter of God. I know very well that when you get among your books and your dust of various kinds, that you are apt to think you can do very well without ideas, imaginings, and dreams, and mere thinking. But there are times in your life when you begin to feel that without thought, idea, impulse, emotion, life would be but a mockery, and death itself would be the welcomest guest that ever crossed your threshold. Ho! every one that desires to know the highest thought, and the highest feeling in the universe, this can be found only in the book of God and in communion with the Holy Ghost.

"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharoah, and bring me out of this house."—14.

The first bit of humanity we have seen in Joseph: human nature is in this little plea. He would have been far too great a man for me if I had not seen this little touch of human nature coming out after all. I have wondered, as I have read along here, that he did not protest and resent, and vindicate himself, and otherwise come out as an injured man. He has been almost superhuman up to this point. Now the poor lad says, "The chain is very heavy, this yoke makes me chafe. I cannot bear this any longer." And he tells the butler, who has good luck before him, that he would like to be taken out of the dungeon. There are times when we want to find a god even in the butler; times when our theism is too great for us, and we want to get hold of a man,—when our religion seems to us to be too aerial, afar off, and we would be glad to take hold of any staff that anybody could put into our poor trembling hands. This is natural, and I am not about to denounce Joseph, to reproach him, as though he had done some unnatural and unreasonable thing. I am glad of this revelation of his nature; it brings me near to him. Though God will not substitute himself by a butler, and will give him two more years' imprisonment, yet God will make it up to him somehow. He shall not want consolation. It was very human to seek to make a half god of the butler to get out of that galling bondage. We shall see, in the course of our reading, whether God be not mightier than all creatures, and cannot open a way to kingdoms and royalties, when we ourselves are striving only for some little, insignificant, and unworthy blessing.

After this the baker told his dream. He was a long-headed man. He waited to hear how the case would go with the butler, and when he heard all that the butler could know about his vision, he went and told his dream, and Joseph told him, "Within three days thou shalt be hanged." The interpreter of dreams must not always tell good news. The interpreter must not tell people's fortunes according to his own ideas. He must do as Joseph did. He must say, "Interpretations are with God. I am but the medium on which the Infinite Silence breaks into sound, into language. It is not in me to tell the meaning of the mystery. It is in God, and with God alone." This is a lesson for preachers of the gospel. It would be a joyous thing for me to say to every man in this house to-day, "You are right; you are on the road to glory; nothing can stand between you and heaven." That would be a very gracious thing to say. But if I fail to warn the ungodly man, to tell him that God is angry with the wicked every day, and yet God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked,—that the Son of God has died for the sins of the world,—that there is no man too vile to be received and to be redeemed by the Great Sacrifice,—then shall I fail in my mission, and my word of joy for a moment shall be a mockery and a cruel thing, and your pale and reproachful countenance on the last day turned upon me would be an everlasting punishment. No, we must be faithful. There are interpretations that are favourable and helpful; there are interpretations that mean ruin, punishment, death.

May God make his servants faithful, that they may speak the cheering, the life-cheering word; and that they may speak the terrible word with self-restraint and with heart-breaking pathos, that men may begin to feel that there is something in the message that ought to make the heart quake and turn their minds to devout consideration. I wanted to have gone further with this to-day, but our rule never to exceed one hour in the service compels me to break off abruptly. I cannot, however, sit down till I have said again, That to every man's dream, and thinking and scheming about life there is an answer in One alone, and that One is Jesus Christ, son of Mary, Son of God, God the Son, Emmanuel, God with us! He never refuses to have long, long talk, either by night or day, with the man who goes to Him tremblingly, devoutly, penitently. Try if this be not so.

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thou trainest thy children, through manifold afflictions, that they may come into large estate of fatherly blessing. Thou dost pour them from vessel to vessel, that they may be as wine that is purified. Thou dost stir up their nest that they may fly towards Thyself. Thou breakest their little strength that they may hide themselves under the wings of Thy great power. We fret under Thy discipline and provoke Thee by the murmurings of our impatience and ignorance. We know not Thy way, nor consider the depth of Thy wisdom. We persist in measuring Thee by our own power; and lo! we fail, and our hearts are sore distressed and tormented, because of our want of wisdom and our lack of trust. Help us to find in Thy fatherhood a constant rest. May we view all the events of our life from the elevation of Thy throne. May we know Thee to be the Lord and acknowledge Thy wisdom and love and power. We are unable to follow the mystery of Thy way. We bless Thee for the revelation of Thy fatherhood given unto us by Jesus Christ Thy Son. He dwelt in Thy bosom. He alone could reveal Thee. We have heard from Him that Thou art love; that Thou carriest the world in Thine heart, and that His Cross is the expression of Thy infinite mercy. We desire to know Christ more perfectly that we may better know Thee. In His image we would see somewhat of the glory of Thy presence. In His words we would hear the tones of Thine own voice. In His love we would see with what depth of affection Thou hast loved the world. Pardon our sin, for it is great. We say this in the presence of the redeeming Cross, because the blood of Jesus Christ Thy son cleanseth from all sin. Hear the confession of our sins and the cry of our penitence, and answer us with all the peace and joy of pardon when we say with our heart, as with our tongue, God be merciful unto us sinners! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 23, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-SECOND NOONDAY SERVICE.)

PHARAOH'S DREAM.

"And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river."—Genesis, xli., 1.

SHOWING how soon men are led into mystery, how thin, how flimsy is the veil which separates dust and visibility and ordinary things, from the spiritual, the invisible, and, in some senses, the terrible. There is mystery all around us, and ever and anon God gives us a peep into that mystery, that He may tame our impetuosity and call us to considerateness and devoutness. Pharaoh was a mighty man in his day, and yet a dream was too much for his power of interpretation. He had a dream, and it mocked him.

He saw strange visions, and they said nothing to him which he could render into intelligible speech. Understand that just before us there is a power of mystery and concealment, a mockery and torment which can unsettle the strongest man amongst us,—frighten us, and make poor, timorous, trembling creatures of the very sturdiest man amongst us. This shows also the weakness of the greatest men. Pharaoh was king, but kings are not always interpreters. It would not do for one man to be every man. Men would forget themselves if they had at their girdles the keys of all locks. It is enough for some of us to dream, and to be puzzled by our dreams and visions. It would be too much for us if we were our own soothsayers, prognosticators, interpreters, and reconcilers. Every man needs the help of some other man.

Pharaoh is mighty, yet Pharaoh is puzzled by his own dreams. The prime minister for the time being is an influential man, but he might not be able to clean his own watch. The great general and warrior of the day has a renown peculiarly his own, but it might be inconvenient for him to get his own coals in. There is a meaning in these things. A man, though he be a king, wants an interpreter now and then to break into common speech the strange and terrible language which he has heard in the silence of the night time. So the greatest, proudest man amongst us has, ever and anon, to call in the aid of some apparently little, contemptible creature who has nothing but hands, or nothing but physical faculties. Let us learn from this our mutual interdependence, the divine idea of unionism and reciprocity. We need one another. There is no man here, no man in the world, how brilliant soever his genius, how mighty soever his gifts, who does not need the humblest and the poorest creature to make up to him something that is wanting to complete the complement and sphere of his power.

"And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled." — 8.

Showing us the discipline, the instructiveness, which may come out of the Unknown. If life were altogether a known quantity, we should forget ourselves. God recalls us, steadies us, gives us thoughtfulness, considerateness, by reminding us, now and again, that the greatest part of our being is an unknown quantity. Pharaoh was troubled. Why? Because some little rival had lifted his puny fist against his throne? He could have crushed such rivalry almost by a word. Why was the king of Egypt troubled? Because of an *unknown* factor; because of the elements he could not see all round about; because of something that glanced at him and then shut its eyes again swiftly; something that touched him on the shoulder and fled away. It is the same with us. God rules us often by the fear of the unknown. You saw a flash of light in your bedroom last night, after you had retired to rest, and that troubled you, shook you; you have to enquire of others in the morning to know what it was. Great man! poor insect! You thought you heard a voice, and yet there was nobody to be seen, and that chilled your marrow,—you drop your pen and run out into the busy streets, that you may retone your nerves. Ha! so it was with you. You could not rest because there was an unexpected glance of light in your room.

You thought somebody touched you, and when you looked behind there was no one to be seen. You had a dream which shook your whole nervous system, agitated, disturbed you, made you unquiet and sad. Why, be a man! What was it? A shadow, an impalpability, a dream! You are a man, with your head upon your shoulders, your eyes in your head, with hands and feet, and completeness of physical constitution. Why should you be startled, chilled, afraid, by something that is mysterious, intangible, invisible? Be a man. But you can't. There is God's power over you. He can frighten you by a dream; He can startle you, confound you, by an unexpected event or combination of events.

This is my difficulty with some men. They can't rest till they have done their very utmost to find out the meaning of a dream. They are disquieted until they find out whence came an unexpected shadow, whence issued an unexpected voice. They enquire; they give themselves no rest, until they have answered such difficulties with as much measure of satisfaction as possible. Yet they care nothing for the subtle temptations that assail the heart, for allurements that seduce the spirit into evil, for the unholy thoughts that steal upon their minds and poison the fountain of their highest life. They care nothing for all the Great Unknown, the entrance to which is called "Death." Is this right? Is this reasonable? To be terrified by a vision of the night, and yet to have no care about the infinite, the invisible, the everlasting! Has God no meaning in the little frights with which he sometimes visits us? When he just touches us, as it were, with the finger-tip of mystery,—when he just seizes us for one moment by some sudden fear? Is it not a hint of the unsearchable riches of his mystery and the inexpressible fulness of his resources, whereby he can torment, trouble, slay men? You who need this exhortation, if such there be here, will have but a sorry answer to give to the last great trouble, the one all-inclusive over-shadowing fear; because by the number of times you have trembled in the presence of unexpected events, by the experience you have had of disquieting dreams, God will charge upon you the capacity of understanding the hints and the monitions which he has given in all the cloud and mystery and wonder of your life.

"And he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh told them his dream: but there was none that could interpet them unto Pharaoh."—8.

Showing how old schools of thought go out; how old tuitional functions are exhausted; how men who have served their day, after a clumsy and incomplete fashion, are dispossessed, put aside; and with such naturalness and beauty of adaptation of means to ends. God does not say to the magicians, soothsayers, and monthly prognosticators, "Now, your day is done, and you must retire from the field." He simply gives Pharaoh, king of Egypt, a dream to which they have no answer. Thus the old school drops out, and a new era of thinking, teaching, and interpretation is inaugurated. A man must not keep up old schoolisms, when those isms are no longer the answers to the dreaming day—the strange,

novel, tormenting life of the current time. The answers of the men referred to in this verse might have been quite enough in other cases. Up to a given point they might have been wise teachers. They had satisfied the Pharaohs of Egypt from time to time. Yet God lets down a dream from heaven, before which these men retire, saying themselves, "We have no answer to it." This is how God trains the world. Old answers will not do always to new dreams. Old forms will not always do for new truths, or new aspects of truth, or new inspirations of divine wisdom. Herein ought we to learn magnanimity, charity, noble-mindedness. I have a dream. Can any man tell me what it is. I have a sorrow at my heart. Can any man tell me where there is balm for such wound? My sin torments me, reproaches me, makes demands upon me which I cannot answer. Is there balm in Gilead? Is there a physician there? There are times when we would give half our kingdom for a *man*. A man of the right force of thought, the right capacity of sympathy, the right tone of music—that wondrous, subtle, penetrating tone which finds the ear of the soul and charms the spirit into rest and hope! There are plenty of *men;* but is there a *man?* Countless populations; but is there a seer, a man who holds upon his girdle the one key that can unlock the wards of my difficulties and can open the lock of my life? Now there is a man who professes to answer all questions, solve all problems, dissipate all dreams, and give us a new start in life. You may have heard his name; you may have heard it so often that it has ceased to be a name, and has become a mere sound—a wavelet on the yielding air. It is a sweet name, and yet it is possible for men to have heard it until they cease to hear it. The name is this: Jesus Christ. Have you heard it before? A thousand times! Yet there is not a name in the newspapers of to-day which excites you less than that name. Such may be the experience of some of you. It is a terrible thing to have outlived Christ; to have made Bethlehem Gethsemane, Golgotha—historic names, spectral shadows! Yet I preach to-day this:—No man's dream can be solved but by Christ; no man's greatest dreams, divinest dreams, visions of himself and of the fnture, can be solved and interpreted but by the son of Mary, Son of God!

"Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day."—9.

Not his fault in respect of having forgotten Joseph, but his fault in the matter for which he was sent to prison in company with the chief baker. He makes a graceful speech concerning his ill-behaviour, and thus introduces to the notice of Pharaoh Joseph, the Hebrew servant to the captain of the guard. The speech of the butler is a a speech to which every man ought to give solemn heed: "I do remember my faults this day." Here is the law of association. One thing suggests another, showing how concatenated and intervolved are all the affairs of this life. "I do remember my faults this day." There are days that go back into our yesterdays and make them live again. There are little circumstances that sound as it were the trump of resurrection over all our

past life, and summon buried things into personality and impressiveness of position and aspect. So it shall be with us all. There will come to us events which will give recollection which shall recall the whole chain of our life. There *is* a way of wrapping things up. Let us clearly understand that, lest any evil-minded man should be discouraged, lest any man who has an evil genius should be thrown into despair. Let us remind him that there is a way of doing bad things, wrapping them up with skilful fingers, and putting them away. That can be done. You can easily scratch away a little mould and hide some fault from the light, or some unholy word or mischievous deed, and throw the mould over it again, and then take your staff in hand and walk on. Do not think that your occupation, you bad Othello, is gone! The worst of it is, that some men think that wrapping up a sin is equal to annihilation. They do a bad deed, throw it behind them, look straight on, as if their looking straight on had actually destroyed the deed. We shall come upon events that shall be reminders, upon circumstances that shall turn us round to face the past with all its variegations, its brightness and its shadows, its purities and its corruptions. What an outlook this is for some of us! There are parts of our life we do not like to think about. When we are suddenly reminded of them we call, Wine! We turn aside a little to some one and say, Play something. There is a time when wine and music shall have lost their power of enchantment, and we shall be turned right round—forced to look at the past! Oh, sirs! it is then that we shall have no little quibbling, wretched questions to put about Christ's Cross and Chist's atonement. When we see life from that point, and feel the bitterness and torment of sin, we shall then know that the Lamb of God never shed one drop too much of his blood, never suffered one pang too many for the sins of the world. We shall not be critics then, pedants then, little technical enquirers then. We shall feel that the Cross, and that alone, can go right into our life, with the answer to our difficulties, and the balm for our wound and sorrow.

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh."—14.

There are great changes in life. Some of our lives amount to a succession of rapid changes; and it takes a man of some moral nerve and stamina to stand the violent alternations of fortune. Some men cannot bear promotion. It is dangerous to send little boats far out into the sea. Some men are clever, sharp, natty, precise, wonderfully well informed, newspaper fed and fattened, and yet, if you were to increase their wages just a pound a week, they would lose their heads. That is a most marvellous thing, and yet nobody ever thought he would lose his head with such an increase of fortune. But it is a simple fact, that some men could not bear to step out of a dungeon into a palace: it would kill them. What helps a man to bear these changes of fortune, whether they be down or up? God,—He can give a man gracefulness of mien when he has to walk down, and God can give him enhanced princely dignity when he has to walk up; a right moral condition, a

right state of heart, the power of putting a proper valuation upon prisons and palaces, gold and dross. Nothing but such moral rectitude can give a man security amidst all the changes of fortune or position in life. His information will not do it; his genius will not do it. Nothing will do it but a divine state of heart. It is beautiful ro talk to a man, who has such a state of heart, when great changes and wonderful surprises come upon him,—when Pharaohs send for him in haste. It is always a good and stimulating thing to talk to a great man, a great nature, a man that has some completeness about him. It must be always a very ticklish, delicate, and unpleasant thing to talk to snobs and shams and well-tailored mushrooms; but a noble thing to talk to a noble man, who knows what prison life is, who knows what hardness of life is, and that has some notion of how to behave himself even when the greatest personages require his attendance. Few men could have borne this change. None of us can bear the great changes of life with calmness, fortitude, dignity, except we be rightly established in things that are divine and everlasting. You will see that I can't make too much of Joseph's princeliness of heart and mind when I read the 16th verse:—

"And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

A reply that would give him foundation and solidity in the presence of any man. He who draws upon the well-head never has an empty vessel. He who knows himself to be the steward, instrument, medium of God, never has to retract his prophecies or to qualify his teaching. There is a lesson here for those of us who preach. When men ask us to tell the meaning of their life, the answer is not in us, it is in God. When men come to us with great problems, anxious questions, we are not called to put them down and to snub them, as if they had trespassed into forbidden provinces. Our answer is to Pharaoh or Cæsar, the poor man or the lone lost child,—the answer is not in me, the answer is in God. He who rests thus upon God will have new sermons, if he have to preach every hour of the day. He will speak light; his words will be as the omnific fiat of God, "Let there be light," and man shall stand in a great blaze. Believe me, God has all answers. We have the lock, he has the key. We have the dream, he has the interpretation. What fools, therefore, some of us must be, going about from man to man, saying, "Can you tell me anything about this?" when God waits to be gracious and bids us welcome to the unsearchable riches of his own wisdom and grace. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do."—25.

God does sometimes give hints of his method among men. Not always are they complete hints; simply indications, outlines, shadows

of things. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. But if we would fully entertain in our heart of hearts the Holy Ghost, I know not that we should not have more mastery over the future, keener insight into men, events, and purposes. Sure am I of this:—That no man loses anything in clearness of vision, microscopic penetrating insight into character, into history, into events, by living in God and serving God. What God is about to do! Now and then God comes down just to say, "You men are only tenants at will; you are not proprietors, you are not even leaseholders. Boast not yourselves of to-morrow!" We should get to think that the wheatfields and the vineyards were all ours, if the Great Proprietor did not come down now and then and breathe upon them that they should wither away,—if he did now and then withhold the dew, so that the roots of the earth cannot be nourished,—if, now and again, he did not send a plague through the air to proclaim to men that they hold things but for a moment, and ought to hold them in the spirit of stewardship. So Pharaoh, having had a dream from God, and interpretation from God through the medium of Joseph, was sharp enough to say, "Then if this be the case you are the man for chancellor." Christian people are thought to be very soft-headed people, not thought to have many business notions and business qualifications; great at singing hymns and going to church, but not much in the market-place or on the exchange. I will not reply to that further than to say that it is unworthy of a reply. As if God did not know more about money than we do,—and more about wheat-growing and wheat-storing than we do! as if God knew everything but how to get the morsel of bread for the meal that is due!

My dear young fellow-students of this wonderful history, believe ten thousand men when they say that they never knew what it was to have a clear mind, a far-sighted vision, until they knew God, knew Jesus Christ, not as their Creator only but their Redeemer, their Sanctifier. Religion does not make business men, nor does it give man capacity, faculty. Religion will increase his capacity and refine his faculty. Religion—understanding by that term the religion of Jesus Christ, Son of God, who lived for us, died for us, and rose again for us—never diminishes the quantity of our manhood; but increases it, refines it, and gives it unity, dignity, and effect.

So we have seen Joseph through what we may term the ill-fortunes. When we come to read about him again, we shall have to turn over a new leaf, on which there seems to be nothing but brightness. Let us, before turning over that new leaf, remind ourselves that there are trials which are *testing* and other trials that are *punitive*. Many men are distressing themselves, when they think of their trials, by imagining that they must have done something wrong, or God never could have sent such afflictions to them personally or to their household. That is a mistake. There are trials that are simply tests, not punishments; trials of faith and patience; not rods sent to scourge men because they have been doing some particular evil thing. God's people are tried. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." The honour is not in the trial, it is in the spirit in which the trial is borne.

Take the trial impatiently, with murmuring against God, and we shall be the worse for our trial, the poorer for our suffering. Take the trial as a veiled angel sent by our Father to say things to us which no other messenger could so suitably convey, then even the rod shall be precious to us, and the herald's utterances of God shall have music in them that shall comfort and revive and cheer the heart.

We all have our trials. Pharaoh and Pharaoh's butler and baker, king and subject, preacher and hearer,—every heart has its own bitterness, its own prison hours, its own times of darkness and sorrow and agony. But there is one healing for us all. Jesus knows, knows our frame, remembers that we are but dust, knows what temptation is in its suddeness, its rapidity, its urgency, its ravenousness. He has promised to be with us when the lion comes and the bear, and the fierce beast, and when the serpent tempts us, and our poor worn heart is failing for strength. To Christ, Son of the living God, Saviour of all men, let us crawl, if we cannot fly ; and the mere turning of our tear-stained eyes towards the place of his dwelling shall be accepted as if we had spread out the strongest wings and outstripped the eagle in our flight towards his presence ! Oh, dear Son of God ! hold Thou us up, and we shall be safe ! Hear the people when they say, Amen !

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, March 30, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-THIRD NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH'S ELEVATION.

"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt."—Genesis, xli., 46.

JOSEPH was about seventeen years of age when he went out, at his father's request, to make enquiry concerning the well-being of his brethren. We find from the text before us that he was now thirty years old. Think of twenty years being required for the fulfilment of a dream! The Lord counteth not time as men count it. He sitteth upon the circle of eternity. He seems to be always at leisure: though doing everything, to be doing nothing. A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday, and all time is but a watch in the night. But what about the effect of this long suspense upon the mind of the dreamer himself? It is hardly any comfort to us to know that God can afford to wait centuries and millenniums for the fulfilment of His purposes. There is another, there is a weaker side to this great question of the dreamer. Here is a young man exiled from

his father's presence and the comforts of his home; labouring under the vilest imputations and the gravest suspicions; wasting, as it appears to us, thirteen prime years of his life. What about this waiting on the part of God, so far as Joseph is concerned? See, for example, how likely it was to discourage his faith in things spiritual. The youth had a dream, a vision, granted him as he believed of God; and yet through thirteen years his dream takes no shape, his vision is but a spectre of the memory—not a grand ruling fact of the life. Mark how his faith comes down accordingly. He reasons thus with himself: "Up to this time I have had faith in the God of my fathers. I have believed that dream and vision, strange token and wonderful signal, all meant something in the divine providence and government of the world. I thought my own dream had a great meaning in it: but I waited twelve months and nothing came of the dream; and twelve months more, and my vision was as nothing; and another year, and I have suffered nothing but ill treatment,—and all this ill treatment has come to me through this very dream of mine. Verily, it was but a vexatious nightmare; or, if a vision of God, it was sent to mock my ambition and to destroy my peace."

If the young man had run off into some such soliloquy as that, he would be a very mighty man who could justly rebuke him for taking that view of the affairs which constituted so large a portion of his life. It is so with ourselves, my brethren. There are many things which conspire to destroy our faith in the invisible, the spiritual, the eternal. There are daily occurrences which teach us that there is something higher than matter; yet there are things occurring around us which are perpetually rebuking our trust in the distant, the intangible, the spiritual, the divine. And who are we, that we should speak to men who for thirteen years have been groaning under heavy burdens, and chide them, as if all the while they ought to have been musical, bright with divine hope and beauty, and not sad and heavy-hearted, mournful and pathetic in tone? We should look at such things seriously, with consideration. It is a terrible thing for some men to believe in God! It takes the whole stress of their nature, and all the help which can come of their personal history and their family traditions, to bind them to the belief that, after all, though God is taking a long time to fulfil their dream, yet He is working it out, and in His own good hour he will show that not a moment has been lost, that all the dozen years or more have been shaped into a peculiar and bright benediction.

Then look at the inferential rectitude of his brethren. Joseph might have turned in upon himself in some such way as this: "That though my brethren dealt very harshly with me, yet they had keener and truer insight into this business than I had. They saw that I was the victim of a piece of foolish fanaticism. I thought I was interpreting to them a dream of Heaven, a vision of God. When I told my dream they mocked me, they visited me with what appeared to be evil treatment. But now that I have had thirteen years of disappointment, vexatious delay, and all the consequent embitterment of spirit, my brethren were right after all. They might not have taken, perhaps, the very best method of showing that they were right; yet now I forgive

them, because they were right on the main issue, and they were called of God to chide my fanaticism, my imbecility, and folly." Well, there is a good deal of sound sense in that monologue. It does appear as if the brethren were right and Joseph was wrong. The brethren can turn to thirteen years' confirmation of their view of Joseph's dream. They could say: "Where are his dreams now? He had a vision of greatness. All the sheaves in the field were to bow down to his sheaf, and all the stars were to make obeisance to him as the central sun. Where are his dreams now?" It is even so with ourselves. There are views of life which I get which impress upon me this conclusion:—Bad men are right after all. There are what are called "facts" which go dead against the good man's faith and the holy man's prayer. There are men to-day who can tell you that they have prayed and struggled and fought and endured, and for twelve years nothing has come of their holy patient waiting upon God,—nothing that is worthy of being set against the stress under which they have suffered, the discipline that has pained them, the misunderstandings which have troubled and tormented their lives. There have, indeed, been little flecks of light upon their daily course; there have been little compliments and social courtesies; but, putting all these things together, they are not worthy to be named in comparison with the poignant anguish that their souls have endured. Yet will not history be to us a tone without language, a messenger without a message, a wasted thing, if we do not learn from this incident that if we have waited twelve years, yet in the thirteenth God may open the windows of heaven and pour out upon us a blessing that there shall not be room to contain? It is not easy to wait. It does not suit our incomplete nature to tarry so long. But we fall back upon history, which is God interpreted, and we find in that an assurance that when the heart is right, the outward circumstances shall be shaped and directed to our highest advantage.

Some men's dreams do take a long time to fulfil. The butler and the baker's dreams were fulfilled in three days. But what was there in their dreams? Everything depends upon the vision we have had of God. If we have had a butler's dream we shall have a butler's answer. If we have had such a dream as a great nature only can dream, then God must have time to work out his purposes. Joseph is not the only man who has suffered for his dreams. God oftentimes punishes us by making dreamers of us. Some men would be thankful to-day if they could lose nine-tenths of their sensibility,—if they could become leathern or wooden to a large extent. This power of feeling, of feeling everything to be divine and to have a divine meaning in it, this power of seeing beyond the visible right into the unseen, this power of dreaming and forecasting the future, brings with it severe pains and terrible penalties. Here is a man who dreams of the amelioration of his race. He will write a book, he will found an institution, he will start certain courses of thinking, he will seek to reverse the thought of his contemporaries and turn it all into a directly opposite channel. He sees the result of all this. He tells his dream, and men laugh at him. They say, "It is just like him, you know. He is a very good sort of man, but there is a good deal of fanaticism in him. He has always got

some new scheme, and some very beautiful vision floating before him." And men who never dreamed—except it was that their wretched little house was being broken into—feel called upon to snub him with their contempt, and to avoid him as a man who is too good or too clever for this poor common world. What are we to make of history if we do not get out of it this lesson :—That there are dreams which God gives, and there are dreams which take a long time to fulfil. We don't make the history—we interpret it. God causes the facts to trauspire, and He says to us, "Be wise, be understanding : draw the right inferences from these circumstances." But was it worth waiting thirteen years for? A good deal will depend upon the answer we give to that enquiry. Is there nothing worth waiting thirteen years for? Some men require twenty-five years hard, good schooling before they are quite as they ought to be. Other men may require only two days, and they are as sharp and clear as any scholar need be. Others require thirteen years on the treadmill, thirteen years discipline and scourging, thirteen years weaning from old affections and old associations. Observe, God was now training a spoiled child, and spoiled children cannot be drilled and put right in two hours. Some of us have been spoiled in various ways. Some with excess of goodness, and some with excess of harshness it may be,—yet spoiled. Our nature has got a twist, or we have got ideas which require to be taken out of us ; and only chastisement, suspicion, imprisonment, scourging, loss, hunger, affliction, and the very gate of death itself, can bring us to that measure of solidity and tenderness and refinement which God wants, in order to start us on the highest course of our manly service. Was it worth waiting thirteen years for? Yes. All countries, according to the biblical statement, came to Joseph for food, and all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn, because that the famine was sore in all lands. He was the feeder of the nations, the father, the preserver, the benefactor of innumerable multitudes! It seems to us to be an easy thing to step into that position. But we do not see the whole case, we do not see the temptations which beset it, the difficulties which combine to form that position ; we do not know all the collateral bearings and issues. Let God be judge. He took thirteen years to make this man, and this man was the benefactor and, under God, the saviour of nations. Why should not we endeavour to learn that lesson? We should like now to be second to Pharaoh. Some of us have the notion that we are tolerably ready, to-day, to receive all the homage which people can give us. It is our mistake. If we wait thirteen years, we shall be better, we shall be stronger and wiser, than we are now. The years are not wasted to souls that make a right use of them. Every year that goes by should lift a man up, give him enlargement of capacity, and tenderer sympathy, and sensitiveness of feeling. So Joseph waited thirteen years. But after he waited, he went before Pharaoh, and was as Pharaoh to the people of Egypt.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?"—xlii., 1.

The old man was perfectly innocent : he had no evil tormenting

associations with the word "Egypt." If his sons had heard there was corn many a mile further off than Egypt, surely these stalwart, active, energetic men would have been off before the old man chided them by this speech of his about waiting and looking upon one another. But corn in Egypt! Some words are histories. Some words are sharper than drawn swords. Egypt was a keen double-edged weapon that went right into the very hearts of the men whom Jacob sought to stimulate. Jacob saw only the outward attitude. The sons appeared to be at their wits' end. Jacob thought his children were inactive—had no spring or energy in them; that they had faded away into ordinary people, instead of being the active, strong-limbed, energetic, and, as he thought, high-minded men of old. Men do not show all their life. Men have a secret existence, and their outward attitude is often but a deception. I have seen this same principle in operation in many stations of life. I have seen it in the church. I have known men, whose interest in the sanctuary has begun to decline, who have been inattentive to the ministry, who have fallen off in their support of christian institutions, and when asked by the unsuspecting Jacobs, "Why is this?" they have said, "That they didn't care so much for the minister as they used to do. There is not food for the soul; they want another kind of thing; and therefore, until some change has taken place, they must withhold support from this and from that." So the minister has had to suffer, to suffer from unkind words, from chilling looks, from attitudes which could not be reported or printed, but which were bad to bear. And the poor minister has endeavoured in his study to work harder, and to get up the kind of food which such souls—souls!—could digest. He has toiled away, and in six months it has turned out that the wretch who criticised him and made him a scapegoat, was preparing for bankruptcy, and was edging his way out of the church, that he might do it with respectability and without suspicion. Such a case is not uncommon. It may vary in its outward aspects and the way of putting it. But there are men that seek to get out of duties and out of positions by all kinds of excuses, who dare not open their heart of hearts and say, "The reason is in myself. I am a bad man. I have been caught in the devil's snare; I am the victim of his horrible temptation and cruelty." It is the same, I am afraid, with many of you young men in the family circle. You want to throw off restraint. You want to alter this arrangement and that in the family, and you speak of your health, your friends, or some change in your affections. You put altogether a false face and a bad gloss upon the affair, so that your unsuspecting father and mother may not know the reality,—the reality being that your heart is wrong or your soul has poisoned itself. You want to be away to do something that is truly diabolic, and which you would not like those to see who gave you birth and who have nourished you through life. Believe this, that not until the moral is right can the social be frank, fearless, happy. When men's hearts are right they will not have anything to hide. They may have committed errors of judgment, but these are venial, trifling. But where there is no deep villainy of the heart, men can bear to tell their whole life, and show how it is that they are fearful concerning this or despondent concerning something else.

This law of association is constantly operating amongst men. A word will bring up the memories of a life-time. You had only to say to ten great-boned men in the house of Jacob—and say it in a whisper—Egypt! and you would shake every man to the very centre and core of his being. If you could have met the oldest, strongest, sturdiest of them on a dark night and said to him, Egypt! you would have struck him as with the lightning of God. Yes, it is a terrible thing to have done evil. It comes up again upon you from ten thousand points. It lays hold of you and holds you in humiliating captivity, and defies you to be happy. That this may be so I think is tolerably clear from the twenty-first verse of the forty-second chapter. The men were before Joseph, after they had been cross-examined by him.—

"And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore, behold, also his blood is required."—21.

Twenty years after the event! Their recollection of that event was as clear as if it transpired but yesterday. Learn the moral impotence of time. We say this evil deed was done fifty years ago. Fifty years may have some relation to the memory of the intellect, but it has no relation to the tormenting memory of the conscience. There is a moral memory. Conscience has a wondrously realizing power,—taking things we have written in secret ink and holding them before the fire until every line becomes vivid, almost burning. Perhaps some of you know not yet the practical meaning of this. We did something twenty years ago. We say to ourselves, "Well, seeing that it was twenty years ago it is not worth making anything to do about it, it is past, and it is a great pity to go twenty years back raking up things." So it is in some respects, a great pity, to bother ourselves about things other men did, twenty years ago. But what about our own recollection, our own conscience, our own power of accusation? A man says, "I forged that name twenty-five years ago, and oh! every piece of paper I get hold of seems to have the name upon it. I never dip the pen, but there is something in the pen that reminds me of what I did by candle light, in almost darkness, when I had locked the door and assured myself nobody was there. Yet it comes upon me so graphically,—my punishment is greater than I can bear!" Time cannot heal our iniquities. Forgetfulness is not the cure for sin. Obliviousness is not the redeemer of the world. How then can I get rid of the torment and the evils of an accusing memory? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." That is the kind of answer men want, when they feel all their yesterdays conspiring to urge an indictment against them, as sinners before the living God. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Can I impress this upon myself and upon you! Time cannot redeem us. Ten thousand ages hence, a man's sin will confront him, scourge him, and defy him to enjoy one moment's true rest. Who then can destroy sin,

break its power? Whose arms can get round it, lift it up and cast it into the depths of the sea. This is a divine work, God's work! It is not to be done by your ethical quacks and your dreamy speculators. It is to be done only by the mighty redeeming power of God the Son, Jesus Christ! This is the gospel I have to preach to man to-day. Fifty years will make no difference in your crimes. Conscience makes us live continually in the present; and only the blood of Christ can wash out the stains of evil deed and unholy memory.

"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

Showing how bad men reproach one another, how little unity there is in wickedness, what a very temporary thing is the supposed unanimity of bad men,—how bad men will one day turn upon one another, and say, "It was you!" Ha! such is the unanimity of wicked conspirators! "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not"; they will turn against thee some day. Though your swords be pointed against one man at the present hour, and you may be unanimous in some wicked deed,—God's great wheel is going round and round, and the hour cometh when the men who urged thee to do the evil deed and share with them their unholy counsels, will seek thy heart, will accuse thee, will charge thee with participation in their nefarious, hellish designs and work. The way of transgressors is hard. Smooth for a mile or two, and then hard, thorny—ravenous beasts there, serpents lurking here. It is very difficult to get back when you once start upon that way. I have known young men who have said, "We want to go just a mile or two down this road, and then, when we find it becomes rather intricate, we intend to turn right round; and then, after all, you will see that we have only been sowing a few wild oats, and just doing a few odd things, and by and by we shall settle down into solid men." I am not so sure about it. If a man goes into the evil way, and the great enemy of souls go after him, he will blot out his footprints. So when the man says, "I will now go back again, I can put my feet where I put them before," he looks for his footprints, but they have gone, and he cannot tell which is east, west, north, south! Footprints gone, landmarks altered, the whole metamorphosed, and to him downward is upward. None so blind as he the eyes of whose soul have been put out.

All this, too, was in the hearing of Joseph. Joseph heard them say that he was their brother. They used to call him "dreamer." He heard them say the child,—tender. Once they mocked him. He heard them speak in subdued tender tones. He remembers the time when their harsh grating voices sent a terror through his flesh and blood, and when he was sold off to travelling merchantmen. It was worth waiting for to see further into one another, after such experiences as these. He never would have known his brethren, but for this terrible process. Some disciplines open men's nature and show us just what they are. "His blood is required," said Reuben. Certainly,– such requirements made

life worth having. There are pay days. There are days when bills become due. There are times when business men are particularly busy, because the day has come on which certain things are due and must be attended to. And shall a paltry guinea be due to you or to me, and a man's blood never be due? Shall we be very conscientious about pounds, shillings and pence, and forget the virtue we have despoiled, the honour we have insulted, the love we have trampled underfoot? He will judge us by our own actions, and will charge upon us that we were conscietious in little things, in trivial relationships, and we forgot that sometimes man's blood is due, and man's honour comes with a demand to be satisfied.

I had intended pursuing the reading further, but time admonishes me to conclude even thus abruptly. Yet I cannot withdraw from you or release my hold upon the attention of any man who has eagerly listened to me until I have said this:—There are requirements which will be urged upon us, demands we must meet. "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If we have cut off other men's thumbs and great toes, our thumbs and great toes will be cut off and thrown under the table, and we shall have to say, as was said by one of old, "As I did unto others so hath it been requitted unto me." This law was not confined to the house of Israel. It is God's law, an eternal, unchanging ordinance. How can we meet, how can we escape from, the debts already due? How am I to get back into my yesterdays and satisfy the past? Men when they are proposing methods of remedy forget that we want the method that comes not only from the future but from the past. How can I gather my whole life? Only by going up to the dear Christ's Cross, and finding in that more than the measure of my sin, more than the measure of my life. As He was the Lamb slain from before the world's foundation, and will for ever be the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne, so He can touch my yesterdays and my to-morrows, and give me rest, pardon, joy, in the perfectness of His redeeming work.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 6, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-FOURTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN UNDER TRIAL.

"And he turned himself about from them and wept." — Genesis, xlii., 24.

JOSEPH had spoken roughly to his brethren whom he knew, though they knew not him. He had declared unto them, by the life of Pharaoh, that they should not go forth from his presence except their youngest brother came with them. Having heard Joseph's decision they began to reproach one another. They said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben turned the whole thing upon them in a very pointed reproach. He said, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also his blood is required." Joseph

understood their speech, though they did not understand the speech of Joseph, because he spake unto them through an interpreter. The interview having come to this point, Joseph turned himself about from his brethren and wept. Harsh experience need not destroy the finest sensibility, the tenderest feelings of the heart. Here is a man who has had twenty years very painful, almost unendurable, treatment; and yet at the end of the period he is susceptible of the tenderest influences, responds emotionally, with tears, with unutterable yearning and tenderness of soul, in the presence of his brethren, and the mute appeal which was involved in that presence. There is something for us to learn here. Our harsh experiences often deaden our sensibility, work in us a sourness of heart and feeling which becomes misanthropic, selfish, resentful. We learn from the history before us that it is possible to be exiled from home, ill-treated by relatives and friends, thrown into the way of pain, sorrow, loss and destruction; yet to come out of the whole process tender, sensitive, responsive to appeals which are made to our nature. Why, there are some men who cannot overget the very slightest offence. If they have not their own way in everything, they shew their resentfulness in a thousand little ways,—they become peevish, censorious, distrustful, ungenial. You never meet them but they give you to understand that they have been insulted, offended, dishonoured. They have had to endure slight, or contempt, or neglect. How little, how unutterably paltry, such men appear in the presence of the man who, after twenty years of exile, solitude, evil treatment of all kinds, weeps when he sees his brethren,—keeps his heart through it all,—has not allowed himself to become soured or misanthropic! He keeps a whole tender responsive heart through all the tumult, and trial, and agony, and bitter sorrow of thirteen years vile captivity, and seven years of exaltation which might, by the very surprise it involved and the very suddenness with which it came, have over-balanced the man's mind and given him false views of himself. If he was great, why should not we be great? If he could keep a whole heart through it all, why should we allow our moral nature to be frittered and dribbled away? Why should we become less instead of greater, notwithstanding the evils we have to endure, and the difficulties which press upon us on every side? A great question, calling men to devout consideration, and to a searching and complete review of their moral position.

After the lapse of twenty years, Joseph on seeing his brethren wept. Why, he might have been vengeful. It is easy for us glibly to read the words, "Joseph turned himself about and wept." But consider what the words *might* have been! We oftentimes see results, not processes. We do not see how men have had to bind themselves down, crucify themselves—hands, feet, head, and side—and undergo death in the presence of God, before they could look society in the face with anything like benignity and gentleness and forgiveness. What the words might have been! Joseph, when he saw his brethren, might have said, "Now I have you! Once you put me in a pit,—I shall shake you over hell; once you sold me,—I will imprison you and torture you day and night; you smote me with whips,—I shall scourge you with scorpions! It shall be easier to go through a circle of fire

than to escape my just and indignant vengeance to-day!" He might have said, "I shall operate upon the law, A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye." That is the law of nature; that is elementary morality. It is not vengeance, it is not resentment; it is alphabetic justice—justice at its lowest point—incipient righteousness. It is not two eyes for an eye, two teeth for a tooth; but an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a blow for a blow, a pit for a pit, selling for selling, and so on. A great many men are perfectly content with elementary morality and alphabetic justice. People don't educate themselves from this kind of righteousness into Christian nobility of disposition. It is not a question of education; it is a question of sanctification. Few men can rise beyond mere justice. Many men find in mere justice all the moral satisfaction which their shallow natures require; they cannot see that mercy is the very highest point in justice, and that when a man stoops to forgive he becomes a prince and a king and a crowned ruler in the house and kingdom of God. It requires all that God can do to teach men this: That there is something higher than the law of retaliation, that forgiveness is better than resentment, and that to release men is oftentimes—if done from moral consideration and not from moral neglect—the highest form of Christian justice. But revenge is sweet! I am afraid that some of us like just a little revenge; not that we would ourselves personally and directly inflict it, but if our enemies could, somehow or another, be tripped up, and tumble half way at least into a pit, we should not feel that compunction and sorrow and distress of soul which, sentimentally, appears to be so very fine and beautiful. Nothing but God the Holy Ghost can train a man to this greatness of answering the memory of injury with tears, and accepting processes in which men only appear to have a part, as if God, after all, had been over-ruling and directing the whole scheme.

"And Joseph turned himself about from them and wept." Afterwards he left their presence and went into his chamber and wept. Think of the secret sorrows of men! The tears did not flow in the presence of the ten men. The tears were shed in secret. We do not know one another altogether, because there is a private life. There are secret experiences. Some of us are two men. Joseph was two men. He spake roughly unto his brethren. He put it on, he assumed roughness for the occasion. But if you had seen him when he had got away into his secret chamber, no woman ever shed hotter, bitterer tears than streamed from that man's eyes. We do not know one another altogether. We come to false conclusions about each other's character and disposition. Many a time we say about men, "they are very harsh, rough, abrupt;" not knowing that they have other days when their very souls are dissolved within them; that they can suffer more in one hour than shallower natures could endure in an eternity. Let us be hopeful about the very worst of men. Some men cannot cry in public. Some men are unfortunately afflicted with coarse, harsh voices, which get for them a reputation for austerity, unkindliness, ungenialty. Other men are gifted with fairness and openness of countenance, gentleness and tunefulness of voice. When they curse and swear it seems as though they were half praying, or just about to enter into some religious exercise. When they

speak, when they smile, they get a reputation for being very amiable men. They don't know what amiability is. They have no secret life. They weep for reputation; they make their tears an investment for a paltry renown. We don't want all our history to be known. We are content for men to read a little of what they see on the outside, and that they profoundly mistake oftentimes. But the secret history, the inner room of life, what we are, and what we do when we are alone, no man can ever tell,—the dearest, truest, tenderest friend can never understand. Don't let us treat Joseph's tears lightly. Under this feeling there are great moral principles and moral impulses. The man might have been stern, vengeful, resentful. Instead of that, he is tender as a forgiving sister. When he looks he yearns, when he listens to their voices all the gladness and none of the bitterness of his old home comes back again on his soul.

"And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this God hath done unto us?"—28.

"And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."—35.

What mistaken views we take about what is called the common-places of life! Some of us are often discontent because of the insipidity of our existence. To-day so like yesterday, and to-morrow will be but a repetition of to-day. We are always wanting something to happen. We say, If anything would but occur to-day to stir the stagnant pool of our life! We want to get out of old ruts and ordinary modes. Here are men to whom something had happened, and they were afraid! We could not live sensationally. Men can bear shocks and sensations only now and then. In life there must be great breadths of common-place and ordinariness. We could not stand a shock every day. It is enough, now and then, to be stimulated and shaken out of what is common and usual, and what has come, by reason of its commonness, to be undervalued and contemned.

They were afraid when they saw their money in their sacks. See the possibility of *mercies* being turned into judgments,—of the very goodness of God striking us in the heart,—of mercy itself smiting us as with the rod of wrath. How can this be so? When the moral nature is wrong, when man's conscience tells him that he has no right to this or that privilege or enjoyment, when man is divided against himself, when he has justly written bitterness against his own memory and his own nature altogether,—then his very bread becomes bitter in his mouth and the sunlight of God is a burning judgment upon his life. Naturally, one would have said that when the men saw their money in the sacks, saw that it had been planned, that it was not an accidental thing,—being in one sack and not in another, but being in every man's sack,—when they saw order, regularity, scheme in the whole thing,—they might have said, "We are glad: we have been

kindly and nobly treated by the men of Egypt; we are thankful for their consideration." Yet, when they saw the money they would not have been more surprised if a scorpion had erected itself out of a sack and aimed to strike them in the face. A time will come to bad men when even God's mercies will trouble them, when the light of the day will be a trouble to their eyes, and when the softest music will be more unendurable than the most terrible thunder. Bad men have no right to mercies. Bad souls have no right to be in the pastures of God's richness of love and mercy and compassion. They feel themselves out of place, or they *will* do so. Altogether, sirs, it is a bad look out for bad men! They cannot find rest anywhere. Put them in the very finest pastures you can find, and there will arise one day in their hearts this accusation: You have no right to be here; your place is in the sandy desert. Put them in the sandy desert, and the very wilderness will be filled with discontent and unrest until the bad men get out of it. Altogether the universe won't want them. God will turn his back upon them! There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

See, further, how small things can upset man's enjoyment, man's pleasure and satisfaction in life. Here is a paltry handful of money in each man's sack, and because of the event there is no rest in the house of Israel that day. Life does not turn upon great events and sublime circumstances. Life, after all, has in it great breadths of repetition. One day is very much like another. It is upon little wheels that great things turn. We undervalue little things. The young man does not care to live to-day, because nothing great or sublime is occurring. He does not know that his very life is hung upon a little thread; that his breath is in his nostrils; that one element thrown into the air he breathes will destroy his animal existence, and that life is such a delicately constructed affair that little things will increase our joy a millionfold, or will utterly consume and destroy our pleasure. How, then, can I get mastery over this life? I don't want to be at the mercy of these little things that occur every day. Is there no means by which I could have a sceptre of rulership and symbol of mastery? Is there no way to the throne, seated on which, I could be calm amid tumult, rich amid loss, hopeful in the midst of disappointment, strong and restful when great things all about me are shaking and tottering to the fall? Yes, there is a way. A way to independence, and mastery, and peace. What is that way? It has a thousand names, but call it now—Fellowship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He who sits—through the mercy of the Most High—on the throne of God, sees all things from God's point of view. He does not grapple with mere details, is not lost amid a thousand mazy ways, but sees the processes of life in their scope, their unity, and their whole moral significance. Great peace have they that love thy law. "O, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." This alone can give a man steadiness, composure, child-like assurance, and saintly triumph amid breaking fortunes, vanishing enjoyments and comforts, and cause him to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When he hath brought his work to an end, I shall praise him for the mercy of his judgments, and for the gentleness of his rod.

"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."—36.

"And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead and he is left alone: if mischief befal him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."—38.

An old man, who does not know what he is talking about! What does the oldest and best man amongst us know about life? Jacob is writing a list of his grievances and misfortunes and distresses, and God's angels are looking down upon him and saying, That the whole statement, though one of what men call facts, is all a mistake from beginning to end. Think of a man writing his life, and of God's writing the same life in a parallel column! Now old Israel is perfectly correct, so far as the story is known to himself. Jacob their father said, "Me have ye bereaved of my children." That is right. "Joseph is not." That is perfectly true, so far as Jacob is concerned, so far as his information extends. "And Simeon is not." That also is literally correct, so far as the absence of Simeon may be regarded. "And ye will take Benjamin away." Precisely so, that is the very thing they have in view. "All these things are against me." It is exactly the same with us to-day. Men don't know what they say when they use words. They don't know the full meaning of their own expressions. They will always snatch at first appearances and pronounce judgment upon incomplete processes. Every day I afflict myself with just the same rod. I know what a fool I am for doing so, and yet I shall do it again to-morrow. There comes into a man's heart a kind of grim comfort when he has scourged himself well; when he knows all the while that ten thousand errors are accusing him of a repetition of his folly.

There are men who don't know their own family circumstances, yet they have undertaken to pronounce judgment upon the infinite! Some men are very familiar with the infinite, and have a wonderful notion of their power of managing God's concerns. We seem at home when we go from home. Here is an old man saying, "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, Benjamin is to be taken away. All these things are against me." Yet we who have been in a similar position, though the circumstances have been varied, have undertaken to pronounce judgment upon God's way in the world, God's government, God's purposes. Why don't we learn from our ignorance? Why don't we read the book of our own folly, and learn that we know nothing, being children of yesterday? We cannot rise to that great refinement of learning, it would appear. Every day we repeat our follies. It is but a man here and there who has a claim to a reputation for religious wisdom.

How life depends upon single events! We may say, the old man's life is bound up in the life of Benjamin. There are individuals, without which the world would be cold and poor to us all. You may say, He is but one of ten thousand, let him go,—she is but one of a million, why care so much for her? We live in ones and twos. We can't live in a countless population. We live in an individual heart, a special individual, personal love and trust. I cannot carry immensity! I can only carry a heartful of love. There are men to-day who would not care to look at the sun again if they lost

that dear little child of theirs; men who look at everything through the medium of an only daughter, or an only son; who would not care for spring, and summer, and golden autumn, for fortune, position, influence, renown, if that one ewe lamb were taken away. Life may be focalized to one point of interest, impulse, desire, and purpose. A man's life may be centred upon one individual existence.

Let us understand, however, that Jacob does not *begin* his sorrow with the possible taking away of Benjamin. This is the last sorrow of a series. That is how some of us are worn down in soul and heart and hope. It is not because you have had taken away one thing; but because that one thing happens to be the last of a series. The great hammer that fell on a block of marble and shivered it,—did that blow shiver it? No. It was blow upon blow, repercussion. No one stroke did it, though the last appeared to accomplish the end. Some of you have had many sorrows. You think you cannot bear the sorrow that is now looking at you through the dark, misty cloud. You are saying, "I should pray God to be spared that sorrow. I have had six troubles: I cannot bear the seventh." Not knowing that the seventh trouble is the last step into heaven! Is there no answer to this difficulty of human life that will give satisfaction to souls? There is one answer. There is a Comforter which liveth for ever. I would not teach—God forbid that I should ever so far lose my humanity as to teach, for a man can only teach well in proportion as he is a *man*—that we should be indifferent about children and friends, the hearts that we love. I don't want to grow into an independence of human regard and human trust and human love; I don't care to be lifted up into that position of hazy, heartless sentimentality as to be able to let friend after friend die and care nothing for the loss. That is not christianity; that is a species of the lowest beasthood. There may be men who can see grave after grave opened, and friend after friend put in and covered away, and shed never a tear or feel never a pang of the heart. I would hope there are no such men. I don't teach that christianity enables us to destroy our feeling, to crush our sensibility, and to be indifferent under the pressure of sorrow. But christianity does enable us to see the whole of a case. Christianity comes to a man in his greatest losses and troubles and bereavements, and says to him, amid his tears and regrets and passionate bewailings, "Thou fool, that which that sowest is not quickened except it die." Christianity teaches that death is but a variation of life; that the grave is not the full stop in the difficult literature of human existence; that when we put away from us the dearest and best things that belong to our hearts, God will bring them back again to us multiplied in strength and beauty and freshness.

I had several other points upon which to dwell: I can't refer to them now. I hasten to say, in conclusion, that some of us require most varied and prolonged humiliation before we are prepared for the highest honours of our life. All these arrangements and tests on the part of Joseph tended towards the humiliation and the penitence of his brethren. He might instantly have said, "I am Joseph!" They could not have borne it. At once he might have said, "Brethren, I for-

give you all." He might thus have done more harm than good. The men required to be tested. They had no right or title to any consideration that came before they were put to scrutiny and criticism. God has a long process with some of us. He has to take away the first-born child, and the last born, and all between. He has to come in, time after time, and turn the cradle upside down. He has to wither our business, and blight our fortunes, and smite us with sore disease. He has to foil our purposes, break up our schemes, turn our counsel back upon us, and confound us at every point, until we begin to say, What does all this *mean?* He has to make us afraid by day, he has to trouble us by night, he has to turn even his mercies into judgments, before he can bring us to say solemnly, with meaning, This must have some religious intent. What does God purpose by all this various discipline?

That, my dear friend, is what He is doing with you now. You can't get on in life, because God wants an interview with you about the deepest concerns of your being. You are foiled, disappointed, discouraged, and all that kind of thing, meaning something higher than you have yet realised. Oh that men were wise, that they would consider! Instead of looking into these little things as being self-inclusive, self-terminating, they should look up to God for the solution of the whole thing in its moral aspects and its moral issues. We shall never get a powerful grasp of life till we move forward to it from the very throne and heart of God. May He enable us, then, so to use this old romantic story as to treat our own lives wisely, with religious thoughtfulness, and with all the trust which becomes men who have no life in themselves, who live in God, and have their being in His eternity!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 13, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-FIFTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH'S REVELATION.

"And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

"And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

"As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

"And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

"Is not this it in which my Lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing."—Genesis, xliv., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

I STOP at this part of the narrative, to say how wonderfully even *spoiled* children may be developed in those very faculties which are supposed to lie dormant under all the pampering and care-taking of exaggerated parental affection. You have observed, from time to time, how deep yet how simple, how complete yet apparently how easy, have been all the plans and schemes

which Joseph devised to meet the exigencies of his trying course. Think of him as the *spoiled* boy with whom we began. The rough wind was not to beat upon him; he was never to get his feet wet; any little thing that his father could do for him was to be done; he was to be coddled and protected and saved from every little annoyance; and if there was an extra drop of sweetness for any member of the family it found its way into Joseph's cup. You say, after reading all this, "What kind of a man will he make? Why, if there were any germ in him of manhood at the beginning, it must have been worn out and wasted by such excessive pampering, such ill-spent care and attention as Jacob's." Yet he comes out of it all sagacious as a statesman, with a wonderful breadth and solidity and substance of character, upsetting all the calculations and notions of people who say that if you take too much care of a boy, pamper a life to excess, you are actually doing more harm than good. Now, let us be clear about that, because there is a particle of truth in that theory. I pause here, if haply my printed words—I dare not say my spoken message—should reach any spoiled child, any over-pampered life. There is no occasion why you should not, after all, be a man! Your father's fondling and your mother's caresses need not kill the vigour that God gave you. You may come out of it all a strong and tender, wise and efficient servant of the public. It has been said, too, by those people who observe the ways of men, that oftentimes those who have been most carefully brought up can, when occasion requires it, rough it with the best grace and can do things which excite everybody's wonder. We say, concerning certain boys who have had nothing but confectionery to eat ever since they were born, that have always been kept out of dangerous places, "Depend upon it, when the wind turns into the east, when there is a flood or a fire, when there is some sudden and terrible adversity in their lives, they will be unprepared for such a visitation." And it has turned out that the spoiled child has sometimes been the best man. He has stooped with a grace which has excited the wonder of everybody; he has shown how possible it is, under the covering of decoration and excess of attention, to be cultivating the best strength and preparing for the wettest day. Some of us, who never had two halfpennies to make a noise with, when we have got into a little prosperity, and then a little adversity has come sharply and suddenly round upon us,—why, we have grunted and complained, and been pettish and snappish, as though we had been nursed in the very lap of heaven and never set our feet on anything coarser than gold. Oh, be men! Do have a life that domineers over circumstances; that takes the bitterest cups, or the exile's solitude, or the slave's lash, and that says, "After all, I am God's child, and I will live for that dear Father."

So when this little scheme had been fully developed, Judah stood before Joseph and made a most eloquent speech to him. Sometimes people who do not preach, but who pay a trifle a quarter to have the privilege of finding fault with other people's preaching, say, "You preachers ought to speak as Judah spoke—with all his naturalness and pathos and directness." It is a very admirable suggestion: the only difficulty about it is its occasional impracticability. Judah could not

have made a hundred and four speeches of this kind every year of his life, besides coming on Wednesday evenings to say a little more. Even people who admire nature most profoundly would have got tired about the hundred and fourth time, especially if they were told that Judah intended to continue in the same pulpit ten years longer. Persons say, "You should always speak in a passion,—then your words will thrill and excite us." So they may do; but you cannot teach in a passion,—you cannot instruct when you have lost self-control. Be reasonable, therefore, in your requirements. I admire passion. The man who is capable of passion—whether it be a stormy thundering passion, or that quiet passion that racks a man's very bones and sinews—I admire; but we must have breadths of calmness, times for exposition, critical teaching, and the like. I say this by the way, lest Judah should unintentionally have inflicted an injury on the whole progeny of preachers. Judah said, according to the sixteenth verse:—

"And Judah said, What shall we say unto my Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found."—16.

Contrast that speech with the scene at the pit's mouth. Can you recall the former scene? They put the boy into the pit, sit down and eat bread, see a party of merchantmen in the distance, suddenly resolve on selling him; and they exchange their brother—body, soul, and spirit—for a handful of shekels, and never say good bye to the child. But now, "What shall we say unto my Lord?" Judah came near and said, "Oh my Lord." "My Lord asked his servants." "And we said unto my Lord." Yet once again Judah said, "My Lord." It is the same Joseph, it is the same Judah. Such are the alternations which occur in man's life! One great difficulty which some of us feel, is the difficulty of punishing a body of men. It is comparatively easy to punish one man. But it is next to an impossibility to punish a committee. The church can injure its one poor minister; but what can the minister do in the way of bringing punishment—not vindictive punishment, but righteous retaliation—upon an immoral corrupt church, that will do things in its corporate capacity which every individual member would shrink from in horror and disgust?

Joseph has had his work set in this business,—so to work that he can bring the rod down upon the *whole* lot. How is it that we lose our consciences when we join bodies of men? How is it that our moral nature becomes diluted the moment we consent to act upon a committee? How comes it, that the honest man, when he joins a church, may be persuaded to hold up his hand in confirmation of a resolution which is based on corrupt morals? Yet this may be done. There is in England to-day many a man smarting from resolutions passed by coporate bodies, and yet, not one of the members of these corrupt bodies will come forward and say, "I took my full share of that resolution, and the responsibility connected with it." One hands over the responsibility to another. One man says, "He would not have voted for it just as it stands, but he thought it might have saved something worse." Another says, "That he didn't fully understand it: it was made in such a hurry, and passed

in such a tumult." And so they go on! But they are breaking one man's heart all the time. God's righteous curse rest upon such foul conspiracy! These are not passionate words. If I have spoken fire it is because there was fuel enough to light.

So they called him, My lord! my lord—my lord! You cannot redeem your character by paying compliments after the deed is done. No man can redeem himself by too-late courtesies. There are civilities which are right in their season, beautiful when well-timed. But they may come at a time which aggravates the old memory and tears open the old sore. This was so long in coming! Let us add up the years, and see how long Joseph was in hearing such words. He was seventeen when he went out first to seek his brethren; he was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh. Thirteen years we have up to this point. Then there was seven years of plenty, during which time Joseph never heard from his brethren. At the end of the seven years, making twenty in all, his brethren began to come before him. So it required something like twenty years to bring about the scene which is now before us. Some interpretations are a long time on the road. Some men have long to nurse their hopes, and to cheer themselves up, thinking that after all God will come. Twenty years is a period which takes the strength out of him, sucks the very sap out of his power, unless he have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of, unless he knows the way to the well-head and can refresh himself with the springing water. So long in coming, but it came at last! This is it, sirs. The bad man's day is a wasting day. Every moment is a moment ticked off,—it is one fewer. But the good man's day is an augmenting quantity,—knows no diminution. Whilst it wastes, it grows; every passing hour brings the day nearer; and the day of the good man has no sunset. Judah continued to speak with wonderful eloquence and pathos, pleading for the release of Benjamin, and making wonderful use of the old man and the grey hairs. In the the thirty-second and thirty-third verses he said:—

"For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren."—32, 33.

Showing the possibility of being so very careful about one member of the family and caring nothing about another. Here is Judah pleading for Benjamin as if he were his own child; yet this same Judah took part in selling another brother. So many of us are only good in little bits! We have points of excellence. People say about us, "After all, there are some points about him that are tolerably good." But what is that? We dont't want to be good in points, we want to be good altogether! Not to love for such reasons as Judah suggested even, in this eloquent and pathetic appeal; but to be good for goodness' own sake. Not to save some man's grey hairs; but to honour God's law, and thus to be most profoundly and universally gentle and pathetic.

Then there is a great fallacy underlying all such pleading as Judah's; at all events, a possible fallacy. We try to compensate for our evil deeds to some people, by being extra kind to other people. Brethren, it

can't be done! You used your poor friend very ill twenty years ago, and the memory of it has come upon you again and again. You have reproached yourself, and cursed yourself, for your unkindness, neglect, misapprehension, cruelty, and, in order to appease yourself, to make atonement to yourself, you have been very kind to some other friend. But you cannot touch the dead one! All your efforts towards helping Benjamin have had in them some hope of doing something at least towards making up for your cruelty to Joseph. But these efforts have been unavailing. Whilst your friend is with you, love that friend. It is but a short grey day we are together. There ought not to be time for strife, and debate, and harshness, and bitterness. The hand is already laid on the rope that shall ring the knell! And when the eyes once shut in the last sleep they don't open again. It is all over! Then come pangs, scorpions, poisonings, piercings! We would give all the world to have another hour—one more short hour—with the dear, dear dead one! But it may not be. Whatever we may do to survivors and relatives, we do not touch the great and terrible blemish of our past life.

Now I have this question to ask: Is there any means by which I can touch the whole of my life? There is not. "Why," you say, "that is the language of despair." So it is, for you. Believe me, and if the despair is settled upon your soul, then you are so far prepared for the gospel, which is this: *You* can find no means of touching all your yesterdays, all your past life; but *God* has found such means. "The blood of Jesus Christ, Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." When we get into the mystery of his Cross, we see how every sin can be met. Believe me, it can be met only by all the mystery of that infinite unspeakable love. So why should we be endeavouring to reach the past when we have enough to do to-day? Why should we seek to hold a lifetime, when we cannot keep ourselves right for one hour? What then? I rest on Christ, and go up to His dear Cross and say, "If I perish, I will perish here, where no man ever yet did perish." May God torment our consciences, raise us to the highest point of self-accusation, remind us of all our neglects, all our harshness, and all our cruelty, till we feel ourselves surrounded by scorpions, by messengers of judgment, and by terrible forces of all kinds, until there be extorted from our hearts the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Then there shall come out of the Cross a glory which will cast the night of the soul away.

Judah having concluded his speech, we read in the next chapter that Joseph could not refrain himself before all those that stood by him. The room was cleared. Joseph wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, "I am Joseph!" Joseph, and yet more than Joseph. We are not the same twenty years afterwards that we are to-day. The old name,—yet may be a new nature. The old identity; yet there may be enlarged capacity, refined sensibilities, diviner tastes, holier tendencies. I am Joseph! It is as if the great far-spreading umbrageous oak said, "I am the acorn!" or the great tree said, "I am the little mustard-seed!" Literally it was Joseph; yet in a higher sense it was not Joseph, but Joseph increased, educated, drilled, magnified, put in his right position. You have no right to treat the man of twenty years ago as if twenty years had not

elapsed. I don't know men whom I knew twenty years ago! I know their names; but they may be—if I have not seen them during the time, and if they have been reading, thinking, praying, growing—entirely different men. You must not judge them externally, but according to their intellectual, moral, and spiritual qualities. To treat a man whom you knew twenty years ago as if he were the same man is equal to handing him, in the strength and power of his years, the toys with which he amused his infancy. Let us destroy our identity, in so far as that identity is associated with incompleteness of strength, shallowness of nature, poverty of information, deficiency of wisdom; so that men may talk to us and not know us, and our most familiar acquaintance of twenty years ago may require to be introduced to us to-day as if he had never heard our name.

But the point on which I wish to fasten your attention most particularly is this:—That there are in human life days of *revelation*, when people get to know the meaning of what they have been looking at notwithstanding the appearances which were before their eyes. We shall see men as we never saw them before. The child will see his old despised mother some day as he never saw her. And you, young man, who have attained the patriarchal age of nineteen, and who smile at your old father when he quotes some old maxim and wants to read a chapter out of what he calls the Holy Bible, will one day see him as you never saw him. The angel of God that is in him will shine out upon you, and you will see whose counsel you have despised and whose tenderness you have contemned. We only see one another now and then. Sometimes the revelation is quick as a glance, impossible to detain as a flash of lightning. Sometimes the revelation comes in a tone of unusual pathos, and when we hear that tone for the first time we say, "We never new the man before. Till we heard him express himself in that manner we thought him rough and coarse, wanting in self-control, and delicacy, and pathos; but that one tone! Why, no man could have uttered it but one who has often been closeted with God, and who has drank deeply into Christ's own cup of sorrow."

Joseph made a more eloquent speech then Judah made. He said to his brethren in the course of his address: "So, now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God." The great man always ready to find an excuse for the injury that is done him, if he possibly can find one! This grand doctrine is in the text: That all our little fightings, and scratchings, and barterings, and misunderstandings, all our tea-table criticisms of one another, and magazine articles in mutual depreciation, all our little schemes to trip one another up, and to snip a little off each other's robe, all these things are after all secondary and tributary. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

My dear friends, why should you and I trouble ourselves about secondary agencies, and collateral movements, and incidental affairs? We should be right with God, right in our hearts, right at the Cross, and then, twenty years after—may be not so many, or it may be more—there shall come a great and true blessing to us, a recognition for which our hearts in solitude have yearned and prayed mightily to God.

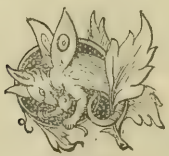
"Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."—Genesis xlv., 15.

A day of reconciliation! A family made one. Brethren coming together again after long separation. It is a beautiful picture. Why should it not be completed, where it needs completion, in our own day amongst ourselves? Ministers sometimes have misunderstandings and say unkind things about one another—and exile one another from love and confidence for years. Is there never to be a day of reconciliation and Christian forgetfulness of wrong, even where positive wrong has been done? Families and households often get awry. The younger brother differs with his eldest brother,—sisters fall out. One wants more than belongs to him; another is knocked to the wall because he is weak; and there comes in the heart bitterness and alienation, and often brothers and sisters never have a kind word to say about one another. Is it always to be so? Don't merely make it up, don't patch it up, don't cover it up,—go right down to the base. You will never be made one, until you meet at the Cross and hear Him say, "He that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." It is in Christ's sorrow that we are to forget our woes, in Christ's sacrifice we find the answer to our sin, in Christ's union with the Father that we are to find all true and lasting reconciliation. But who is to begin? That is the wonderful question that is often asked us. Who is to begin? One would imagine that there were some very nice people about who only wanted somebody to tell them who was to begin. They want to be reconciled, only they don't know *who* is to begin. I can tell you. *You* are! That is exactly how it is. But I am the eldest,—yes, and *therefore* ought to begin. But I am the youngest. Then why should the youngest be an obstinate pig-headed child? Who are you that you should not go and throw yourself down at your brother's feet and say, "I have done you wrong, pardon me!" Who is to begin? You! Which? Both! When? Now! Oh! beware of the morality which says, "I am looking for the opportunity, and if things should so get together—" Sir! death may be upon you before you reason out your wretched casuistry; the injured or the injurer may be in the grave before you get to the end of your long melancholy process of self-laudation and anti-christian logic.

May the God of the families of the earth and of all brotherhoods make us willing to forgive, eager to be harmonised one with the other! Then our days shall be very bright, and we shall have a good hope that, when all this scene has gone, we should be one in our Father's house, and go out no more for ever!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou makest the outgoings of the morning to rejoice. May we answer the appeal of Thy light! May our life be a life of thankfulness, a constant and profound recognition of the infinite, unceasing goodness of God. Thou leadest us by a way that we know not,—crooked, steep, dark, perilous oftentimes: yet, since it is Thy way, we shall walk surely and our steps shall be steadfast. Were we to take our way, we should be overwhelmed by its dangers, we should find no home at last. But the road is Thine, and the protecting hand is Thine, and the end is Thine. Keep us patient, hopeful, trustful, thankful; then the very difficulty and weariness of the way shall but increase and sweeten our final song. God be gracious unto those of us to whom the way is very long and hard! Sanctify our long waiting! Give Thy grace to us in our weakness, that it may become to us actually a source of strength. Where Thou hast laid Thy rod most frequently and most sharply do Thou also grant Thy grace, that it may be sufficient for the sufferer, bearing him up, cheering his inmost soul, reviving his love, even amidst the poignancy of his anguish and the bitterness of his disappointment. Let Thy light be in us to-day. Thou dost always bring the light round about us, but we cannot live on that light. We want the inward glory, the splendour of the heart, the brightness which is above the brightness of the sun. Then there shall be in our hearts, as there is in Thy heaven, no night. Give us wisdom to understand Thee, to wait for Thee, to pray to Thee. Save us from the temptation which comes of our own incompleteness and imperfectness. Help us to distinguish between the spasms of our own broken strength and Thy great power. Oh, Thou Creator of the ends of the earth, be merciful unto us, and give us to feel how good a thing it is to be nestled in the very heart of Thy love! To the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose name we were baptized, and whom we adore as one God, be the homage of every heart, time without end! Amen.



The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 20, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-SIXTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOSEPH'S DEATH.

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation."—Exodus, i., 6.

TO-DAY we bring to a conclusion our readings of the history of Joseph. We have been engaged some seven Thursdays in going over the points of that romantic story. This morning we gather up a few miscellaneous points, and conclude our whole study of the eventful, stimulating, and instructive narrative. The first point occurs in connection with Joseph sending for his father.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me Lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

"And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

"And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty."—Genesis, xlv., 9, 10, 11.

Joseph was still a *son*, though lord over all Egypt. He had still an affectionate heart, though pomp and circumstance conspired to give

him great eminence and wonderful power in the whole land of his enforced adoption. A man should never forget his father. Twenty years afterwards and more, Joseph's heart yearned after his father with all a child's clinging trustfulness and unsophisticated trembling pathos. A man should always be a boy when his father is at hand. Did I say always? Alas! I am compelled to add that there are circumstances under which fathers cease to be fathers. There may arise such combinations of circumstances as shall dispossess a man of his fatherhood, that shall turn him into a stranger and an alien. It is well, therefore, for us, whether fathers or children, clearly to understand this matter. Nothing but moral considerations should ever separate a father and his child. Not because the father is poor should the child disown him or treat his name lightly; not because he is destitute of learning should a child affect to contemn his parent. But when the father is morally corrupt,—when all the rain, and sunshine, and dew, and living breeze of a child's long-continued patient love have been lost upon him,—then there may come a time of final separation, when the child says, "I have no father." What is animal parentage, after all? You say you are a man's father: but what is the meaning of that? If that fatherhood is but fleshly, it is not parentage in any deep, tender, lasting sense of the term. It may be a relationship that can hardly be helped,—an external temporary relationship; there is no kinship enduring that is not moral. It is when souls are akin that fatherhood and sonship, brotherhood and sisterhood, are established. It may come to be the same thing with the son. There are fathers who have been compelled to shut the door on their own sons, and did not do so lightly; it was not for the first offence,—it was not until every hope had been disappointed, every godly desire had been repulsed and mortified, and all the volume and passion of human love had been repelled and scorned and blasphemed. Blessed are they who would for ever keep all family relationships, all tender kindreds, fresh, blooming, bright! If they would do so they must live in Christ,—their centre must be fixed upon the eternal love of the One Father. Then they will never outgrow their affections; they will be young for ever, responsive to the voice of love, always sensitive, tender, good.

A very beautiful speech is this which Joseph makes concerning his father. "Say unto him, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; therefore the bond between us is cut. Say to him, I disown my relationship to a shepherd, a man living in the bush, keeping flocks and herds, and wandering about from place to place. Say I am lord of all Egypt, and to come within the circle of my influence is to be blinded and dazzled by my glory." What a chivalrous, filial, beautiful speech! But fortunately we have put that speech into Joseph's mouth. Yet how well it would come after the introduction, "Say unto him, I am lord over all Egypt." But that is not the message. You would say, you who had not read it but only heard it, "It sounded very like that." So it did, but it was perfectly different from that. The speech reads: "Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt." It is the word *God* that saves the speech, that makes it musical, that gives it high tone and noble bearing, profound and gentle meaning. If Joseph

had said, "Tell my father I am lord over all Egypt," I should have expected a different ending to the speech. But when a man's greatness—whatever it be, political, social, or religious—is all traced to God, out of that one consideration will come wisdom, and nobleness, and pathos. Always depend upon a man who finds in God the redeemer of his soul, the elevator of his circumstances. Religion never made a man haughty; Christianity never made a man unendurable. There have been many great men self-conceited, dangerous to go near, self-important,—always standing upon what they call their dignity; but they did not know what it was to live in God and to live for Christ, and to exert their influence from the elevation of the Cross. My young friend on the way to eminence, having a sceptre of wide influence just in view, seeing thy way clear to ten thousand a year and many accessories to thy greatness and stability, know this: That thy throne will have but a tottering foundation if it rest anywhere but upon the omnipotence and all-graciousness of God.

The next point arises in connection with Jacob's receipt of the intelligence:—

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

"And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."—25, 26, 27, 28.

Observe, in the first instance, the old man's heart fainted, for the news was to him too good to be true. There is in life an element which is continually upsetting probabilities,—thus calling men up from lethargy, from that flatness, staleness, and unprofitableness of life which would necessarily predominate if there was nothing strange, sensational, and romantic in our human relationships and in the events by which we are surrounded. Now and then we require to be startled a little. Men do us good who rouse us. The preacher who makes me shake does me good,—who gives me one new view of truth, who rouses me out of my indifference, who gives me to feel that as yet I know next to nothing. So in daily life, things that are common sometimes flame up before us into new significance, and old ruts seem sometimes to have new spikes of grass and new roots coming out of them. These things call us away from apathies that would benumb and deaden the soul. But we cannot always live in the wonderful. It is there that so many persons get wrong. You cannot live upon champagne; you cannot live upon luxuries; you can't live healthily on sensation. You must have something substantial, real, deep, vital,—something that touches the profoundest experience of your life, the inmost consciousness of your spirit, and that follows you through all the engagements of the day. You must have the practical as well as the imaginative; you must have the substantial as well as the poetical. I believe in the airy dream; I believe also in the solid rock. I like to look on the far-flashing cross that surmounts the great pile; but let me remember that yonder cross

never would have blazed in the rising or setting sun if there were not somewhere the great strong foundation on which it is rested.

So though the news was too romantic for Jacob, though it caused him to fall into a swoon, yet the old man, who always had an eye for the practical, looked up, saw the waggons, and his heart revived. We must have waggons as well as poems. It is a sad and vulgar thing; but we must have the substantial, the tangible, and the appreciable, as well as the metaphysical the transcendental, the mystical, the bewildering, and the grand. It is even so in the religious life. The long prayer must be succeeded by the noble deed. The bold theological statement must be flanked, buttressed, or otherwise supported by unchallengable morality. What if a man says he believes in God and his deeds be ungodly? what does his belief in God do for him? What if a man says, "I have faith," and have no works? What if a man preach the gospel and be not *himself* the gospel?

The brethren had good news for their father. But beyond the good news there must be something else to bring it near to his appreciation. You require to meet men according to their circumstances. God must himself become man before he can touch us and get his mighty redeeming hold upon us; for we know not the infinite except as it be accommodated to us through the medium of Christ's dear personality, except as it be focalised in the one redeeming life. What did Jacob say when power of speech returned to him? "It is enough; Joseph is yet alive." What did his brethren say about his being in Egypt? They said he was *governor* over all the land of Egypt. Joseph sent word that he was *lord* over all the land. Jacob said, "He is alive!" A man can't live upon lords and governors and fine eminent personages in their merely official capacity. There are times when we strip away all ribbons and flowers and decorations and other trumperies, and go right into the life and heart of things. Why if they had said to Jacob, "Joseph is yet alive: we found him lying in the hedge side, just alive, with hardly anything to cover him,—a poor, lonely, forlorn wanderer!" would that have made any difference to Israel? Would he not just as much have yearned for his child? Let us hope he would. There are times, I repeat, when we want to know about the life rather than the condition. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth.

Whatever Israel's feelings might have been concerning Joseph had the statement of the circumstances been other, let me preach this glorious gospel: God does not ask whether we be lords, potentates, or governors; but whether we have turned our poor dying eyes towards our abandoned home. The moment He hears—and He always listens—the soul say, "I will arise and go to my Father," He comes to meet us, to anticipate the statement of our sin and penitence, and to clothe us with his unsearchable riches. Men can't believe that. It is at that point that souls are damned by the million. They want to send word to Him that they are lords over the land and governors over their circumstances; that they can maintain themselves pretty well, after all; but if he likes to meet them on an independent basis they will hold an interview with Almighty God. He will not accept that challenge.

He does not know us when our heads are lifted up in that insanity. It is when we are nothing and have nothing, and *know* it, and turn our poor, disappointed, shattered hearts towards his dwelling-place, towards the Cross of Christ, that he meets us with the infinite fulness of his pardon and all the assurance of his willingness to save.

Then the third point brings up the meeting between Joseph and his father:—

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

"And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."—xlvi., 29, 30.

A beautiful combination of official duty and filial piety! The whole land of Egypt is suffering from famine. Joseph is the controller and the administrator of the resources of the land. He does not abandon his position and go away to Canaan; but he gets the chariot out and he must go part of the road. "I know I am father to Pharaoh and all his great people. I shall not be away long; I shall soon be back again to my duties. I must go a little way to meet the old man from home." Yes, I don't care what our duties are, we can add a little pathos to them if we like; whatever we be in life, we can add a little sentiment to our life. And what is life without sentiment? What are the flowers without an occasional sprinkling of dew? It may be a grand thing to sit on a high stool and wait till the old man comes upstairs. But it is an infinitely grander thing, a "lordlier chivalry," to come off the stool and go away to meet him a mile or two on the road. Your home will be a better home—I don't care how poor the cot—if you will have a little sentiment in you, a little tenderness and nice feeling. These are things that sweeten life. I don't want a man to wait until there is an earthquake in order that he may call and say, How do you do? I don't want a man to do earthquakes for me. Sometimes I want a chair handed, and a door opened, and a kind pressure of the hand, and a gentle word. And as for the earthquakes, why—wait until they come!

What a beautiful picture of reunion is this! He fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. See them there! The old man not speaking, because he cannot speak,—speaking most because saying nothing. Joseph not speaking for some time. Only weeping upon one another! Then Jacob, not wanting the thing to be spoiled, says, "Now the next thing, the next thing, Joseph, must be heaven! Whatever comes after this will be an anti-climax. Now let me die!" It was as old Simeon spake when he saw the child of God, "Now let thy servant depart in peace." We do now and again in life come to points we don't want to leave. We say, "Lord, let us build here." But the Lord says, No, not here, because there is a lunatic at the foot of the hill; and you must not build and put yourself into nice places, and settle down, until you have seen if you cannot heal the lunacy that is down in the world.

I can't look upon those two men together without feeling that moral gulfs may be bridged. Joseph was no prodigal son. But as I see Joseph and his father resting on each other, and weeping out their

joy, I can't but think of that other and grander meeting, when a man who has been twenty years away from God, or fifty years away from all that is true and beautiful in moral life, finds his way back! He does not go in a chariot or walk uprightly, but crawls on his bare hands and knees; and God meets him, lifts him up, and when the man begins to tell "How poor and—" God hushes him with a great burst of forgiving love! It seems as if God will never allow us to finish the statement of our penitence. It is enough for Him that we begin the story, punctuating it with sobs and tears. He causes the remainder of the statement to go down in the ocean of his love, in the infinitude of his mercy! Is there to be any home-going to-day? Is any man going to say, "I shall arise and go to my father." Go! He calleth thee,—poor old pilgrim, grey-headed, burdened, sinful, self-abhorring! Go! And thou shalt come out no more for ever!

The fourth point arises in connection with Jacob's introduction to Pharaoh:—

"And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?

"And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."—xlvii., 7, 9.

It is very tender, pathetic, and instructive to hear an old man sum up his life. How did Jacob sum up his earthly course? He said it was a "pilgrimage." He had been going from place to place, hardly ever resting, always on the move, scarcely ever taking off his sandals, scarcely laying down his staff. Life is a pilgrimage to us. We are strangers here; we have no continuing city here. Jacob also said that the days of the years of his life had been few. Think of a man over a hundred years of age saying that his days had been few! They are few when looked back upon. They seem so to run into one another as to make but a moment. You look a hundred years ahead, and you cannot endure the thought of existing, under present circumstances, so long a time. Yet, if you could go to the other end of the century and look back upon the vanished days, you would say they had been few. Jacob said that not only the days had been few but evil. We do get to see the brokenness of life, its incompleteness, its fragmentariness, when we get through it. But when it is all over, and the old man looks back, he says, "Evil have been my days. If not morally evil altogether, if here and there there are signs of holiness and trust in God,—yet, looked at as a whole my life has been a poor structure; my days have been evil; I have been wanting in effective work. There is not one word of self-praise I can claim when I look back on the days of my pilgrimage."

Now we come to the last scene of all, to close this strange eventful history. "Joseph died, and all his brethren and all that generation." Joseph died! Then after all, he was but mortal, like ourselves! It is important to remember this, lest we should let any of the great lessons slip away under the delusion that Joseph was more than man.

We have seen fidelity so constant, heroism so enduring, magnanimity so—I had almost said—divine, that we are apt to think there must have been something more than human about this man. No. He was mortal, like ourselves. His days were consumed as are our days; little by little his life ebbed out; and he was found, as we shall be found, dead. So, then, if he was but mortal, why can't we be as great in our degree? If he was only a man, why can't we emulate his virtue, so far as our circumstances will enable us to do so? We can't all be equally heroic and sublime. We can all be, by the grace of God, equally holy, patient, and trustful in our labour.

Joseph died! Thus the best, wisest, and most useful men are withdrawn from their ministry! This is always a mystery in life: That the good man should be taken away in the very prime of his usefulness; that the eloquent tongue should be smitten with death; that a kind father should be withdrawn from his family circle; and that wretches who never have a noble thought, who do not know what it is to have a brave heavenly impulse, should seem to have a tenacity of life that is unconquerable; that drunken men and hard-hearted individuals should live on and on,—while the good, and the true, and the wise, and the beautiful, and the tender, are snapped oft in the midst of their days and translated to higher climes. The old proverb says, "Whom the gods love die young." Sirs! There is another side to this life, otherwise these things would be inexplicable,—would be chief of the mysteries of God's ways. We must wait, therefore, until we see the circle completed before we sit in judgment upon God.

Joseph died! Then the world can get on without its greatest and best men. This is very humiliating to some persons. Here is, for example, a man who has never been absent from his business for twenty years. You ask him to take a day's holiday, go to a church opening or to a religious festival. He says, "My dear sir! Why, the very idea! The place would go to rack and ruin if I was away four-and-twenty hours." It comes to pass that God sends a most grievous disease upon the man,—imprisons him in the darkened chamber for six months. When he gets up at the end of six months, he finds the business has gone on pretty much as well as if he had been wearing out his body and soul for it all the time. Very humiliating to go and find things getting on without us! Who are we? The preacher may die, but the truth will be preached still. The minister perishes,—the ministry is immortal. This ought to teach us, therefore, that we are not so important, after all; that our business is to work all the little hour that we have; and to remember that God can do quite as well without us as with us, and that He puts an honour upon us in asking us to touch the very lowest work in any province of the infinite empire of His truth and light.

When few die we can name them one by one,—count them on our fingers. "Joseph died." Some deaths are national events. Some deaths are of world-wide importance. "And all his brethren." There we begin to lose individuality. Death is coming upon us now quicker. We have no time to go through them,—Judah, Simeon, Reuben, and so forth. "All his brethren and all that generation." Death is mowing

them down! You have no time to read their names and pick each out individually. Such is death! Crushing up one generation in one grasp; mowing down the next with one swing of the scythe. We cannot all, therefore, be equally conspicuous; each cannot have his name written in history as having died. Some of us will be classed in dozens. "All his brethren," and no name left! Others of us will not even be known as families and households. We die as parts of a generation,—a great crowd, an innumerable body! What of it? The thing is not to leave a name behind us—a mere name. It is to leave behind influences that hearts will feel, memories that will be cherished at home and that will be blest by those whom we have served and helped in life. Die! The time will come when men will laugh at death. We shall one day get such a view of the universe, that we shall look down upon death and say, "Oh Death, where is thy sting?" How so? Jesus Christ abolished death. If we believe in Him, death will no longer be to us a spectre, a ghost, a frightful guest in the house, sucking out our blood and darkening our future. It will then become a swinging door,—and, as it swings, we shall pass in to light, to music, to rest. Death will always be a frightful thing to the man who has no Saviour. Death must be more or less a terror to every man who is not in Christ. He may have lived himself into that measure of beasthood that will not confess terror. I never knew of an ox, a felled ox, saying, "Death is very terrible." So there are some men who have lived themselves down so beastward and devilward that they hardly know death from life. But to a man who has any consciousness of right and wrong, any moral sensitiveness, if he have not God in the house, death must be an unwelcome thing to him, an ugly guest, a dark and terrible interlocutor. But the man who is in Christ, his life is above the reach of death. When the body crumbles and falls down, to get up no more in this state of things, the soul is a guest in Heaven. A guest? Nay,—he is a child at Home!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, April 27, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE STRAIT GATE.

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—Matthew, vii., 14.

DURING the course of our teaching in this place, we have frequently insisted that there is in many practical departments of life and thought a much less distance between human reason and divine revelation than has been supposed by many. The ways of God and the thoughts of God are, indeed, higher than man's ways and thoughts, as the heaven is higher than the earth. Necessarily so; and yet divine revelation—in some departments at least, and those not the least important—may be the continuance and consummation

of human reason. God may meet us upon the lines which we ourselves have laid down for the guidance of our own life. He may continue, exalt, and glorify those lines until his revelation shall actually be the climax, the crown and glory of our own reason.

The text before us affords an opportunity of continuing the kind of illustration we have so often employed. It enables us, at the very outset, to say that in proportion to the importance of any kingdom is the stringency of the conditions of entrance. In the mean time we shall forget that there is a kingdom of heaven. We shall look into the kingdoms of the earth which men account important, imperial, worthy of possession; and I guarantee to find upon the portals of all such kingdoms these words: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." It will be something to find that inscription above the gates which open upon all the kingdoms which men who sneer at religion think important. Then, if we can read this inscription in their own handwriting upon the gates which open on their petty empires, what if we shall find the same words written—only written by the hand of God—over the portals which open on the city of the Great King? We shall thus be enabled to see that divine revelation, though often above human reason, is not always opposed to it; and that God will have a judgment against us—irresistible, penetrating, and terrible—on account of the very principles which we ourselves have laid down in those departments of life which we considered important.

Here is the kingdom of human learning: Knowledge, critical acquaintance with letters, ample and accurate information about history, power of scientific enquiry, collation, analysis, all that is known by the name of learning,—and over the gate of that kingdom I find this inscription, "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way." A man does not by shaking his little arms shake himself into scholarship; it is not done by a wave of the hand. It is done in yonder way:—See! where the man gets up before the lark, before the sun calls him with its voice of light, who trims his lamp, and goes over yesterday's lesson in critical review before he begins to-day's study; pulls himself up by every variety of discipline; cudgels his memory, stores his mind with all kinds of literature; who works after the sun has gone away, to take the morning with him to some distant clime, turning over the pages of his book—not as you turn over the pages of your light reading—but reading every word, studying every sentence, extracting the gold from every book. We say, "Why are you doing this?" "Because," he says, "I am determined to be a subject in the kingdom of learning, and the motto over the gates is this, 'Strait and narrow is the gate, the road.'" So we begin already to admit the principle of the text, that in proportion to the scope and importance of any kingdom is the stringency of the conditions of entrance.

Here is a little kingdom, which we shall characterise as the kingdom of merely muscular competition. Men are going to try muscular force with their fellow-men,—they are going to have a boat race. You and I cannot walk along the river-side and instantly take into our heads the notion that we will have a spin with these men and beat them all. That can't be done. Strait is the gate and narrow is

the way that leads even to athletic supremacy. The men are going into training; they are going to put themselves under tutors and governors; they are going to submit to a bill of fare and a course of discipline which you and I would take to very unkindly. But why are they going to do so? Because they have determined to take a higher seat in the kingdom of mere athletic exercise and enjoyment. Now it is a very strange thing that you, a man fourteen stones weight, cannot just get into the very first boat that comes in your way and outstrip the men who have been in drill and training and exercise for the last three months. But you cannot do so. As a mere matter of fact, a man who has been drilled, disciplined, exercised, will beat you, except a miracle be wrought for your advantage. So we are getting nearer and nearer to the principle that in proportion to the importance of any object, the scope of any kingdom, the consequence of any condition of affairs, is the narrowness of the road, is the straitness of the gate. It is the same with all kinds of intellectual supremacy. Granted that there may be inspired geniuses here and there,—let us allow that some men may have had a short and easy road to intellectual power and supremacy,—still the rule holds good: That he who would be highest must toil most perseveringly and conscientiously.

Here, for example, is a man who wishes to excel in authorship. You read his book. You don't see all that lies behind the book. You don't see the rough outline which he first sketched,—writing off-hand, as it were,—on, and on, and on,—blotting, and interlining, and erasing. There it is; just a rough manuscript, with hardly any shape,—a line of thought running through it which he alone can see. He lays it aside and takes up another sheet; brings then the rough draft, writes over many parts with care, compression, condensation, that he may give it point and pertinence. He burns the first draft; lays the second aside, lays it by for six months, until he has become another man, viz. a critic of his own productions. He takes up his manuscript again for the last time,—goes through it, striking out everything that is opposed to taste, inserting, improving, refining, curving, enriching, and expending himself upon it. Ask why? He says, "I mean this book to live after I have been taken away. I mean this to be a testimony. I mean this to be the last, richest, best expression of my attainments and my convictions; therefore I have expended myself fully upon its preparation." What is it that is written over the man's study and over the man's desk? This: "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way." No doubt there are men who can write beautiful nothings by the mile, sell them in the morning, and have them forgotten at sundown. But the writers who wish to enrich all coming generations, to stimulate the most distant posterity, have not the knack of shaking out of their coat sleeves the standard literature of the country. It is a question of preparation, self-culture, self-control, and putting out the stress of the whole being upon it. Then, at least, a man deserves to succeed. The effort after all may not be masterly, the man may fail to attain the position at which he has aimed; but "in all labour there is profit," and the man himself is fuller and stronger for the very industry which he has put forth.

We are thus enabled to say that the entrance to the kingdom of Heaven is necessarily the straitest, narrowest of all. What are other kingdoms to the Kingdom of Life? When you have learned all that books can convey to you, what is your kingdom? When you have obtained all the money that you can possibly own, what is the kingdom of pecuniary means? When you have sharpened, quickened, stimulated, and enriched your brain to the highest possible point, what is the kingdom of mere intellectual force and supremacy when compared with the Kingdom of Life in God? As therefore this is held to be the highest kingdom of all, where is the unreasonableness of making the conditions of entrance into this kingdom the most exacting and stringent of all? For one, I am prepared to say, on reading the conditions, "This is human reason; this is human reason glorified; this is God adapting Himself to our own instincts." Some men have found the gate very strait and the way very narrow. For example: The philosophical man who came to Jesus by night, admitted that Jesus Christ was a teacher sent of God, otherwise he could not have done the works which he did; Jesus took him to the gate at once, and said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of Heaven." *See* it! Have no notion about it,—have no glimmering conception of its light and extent and glory. The gate was there called, "the new birth."

Another man came to Jesus Christ carrying on his broad shoulders riches without reckoning, great possessions. Jesus said, "Before you can go through this gate you must lay that burden down. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way." "Lay it down? Well, then, when I get through the gate, can I reach over and pull it up and take it back again?" "No. Sell all that thou hast, give to the poor; take up thy cross and follow me." And he said, "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way," and went away from it carrying his burden with him.

Then there was a third man—a lean, cold, spectral man—never sunny, genial, poetical, for a day in his life: skin and bone—skin and bone. And they called him a Pharisee. He stood in all his erect leanness, and said how often he fasted, what tithes he paid, and what an excellent man he was. Jesus Christ said, "Well, you cannot go in at this gate: You will have to lay down and trample under foot all that fasting and tithe-paying, all that excellent virtue, for 'Strait is the gate.'" A man has to lay down a great deal before he can get through this gate. He has to take a great many idols out of his pockets and throw them away; then to go through the chambers of his mind and take out theory after theory, by the hundred, and blow them away. Ha! Except ye be converted and become as little children—simple-minded, gentle, pure, loving, trustful children—ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Great, tall men, who believe in themselves—who are afraid they will knock their heads against the stars if they stand right up—cannot cannot get in. The gate truly is strait and the way narrow!

But let us suppose for one moment that a man can get into circumstances, conditions, and surroundings for which he is not prepared. Let those conditions and surroundings be moral, and let his disqualification be of the same kind,—moral. What will follow? This: he will

soon want to get out again. Here is a wedding feast,—the guests are all prepared for the banquet and the joy. One man has stolen in who has not the right robe on. Why, it is as if he had crept into an oven, a hot oven! Nobody speaks to him; yet he feels if there was only a way out—down here, or along there, or up yonder—anywhere to get out again! because the whole atmosphere is against him. You know what it is to have an *atmosphere* against you? Not an army of soldiers coming out, so many abreast, with spikes, and guns, and mighty weapons of war. Not that, but the atmosphere, the subtle, impalpable thing that gets round and round you, and burns you! It would be even so if a man could get into the kingdom of heaven by jumping over the wall, instead of going through the strait gate, walking along the narrow way. The ungodly man could not be at home in heaven. Heaven is not in the jasper wall, and the pavement of gold, in the sparkling fountains, and the amaranths immortal as the beauty of God. Heaven is in the spirit, in the disposition, in the soul. If a man could get into God's heaven, and have with him—not a bad deed, not hands stained, tainted, and blackened through and through—but just an unexpressed desire, something between a thought and a thing, that is impure and untrue, that one spot would ruin his heaven, and he would long to get out of it. He who goes not in by the gate and travels not by the narrow road, even if he could be admitted into heaven, would soon wish to be out again.

We are thus prepared to say, that by so much as men have the power to strive for inferior kingdoms will they be witnesses against themselves if they fail to strive after the highest kingdom of all. Men are continually getting up evidence which will be used for them or against them in the day of judgment. The day of judgment may be the shortest day that ever dawned, may be but a moment, because every man will judge himself, and one look at God's face will mean destiny! By so much as we have the power to strive, and have admitted the principle of striving, in relation to inferior kingdoms, are we preparing a judgment against ourselves if we have not accepted the conditions of entrance into the divine empire. Let us now have a judgment day. There is no occasion to wait ten thousand years for the day of judgment. We can have it *now!*

Here is a man who has, for the last thirty years, been scraping money together. Getting up early, sitting up late,—squeezing, pressing, urging, driving everything that promised to contribute to his possessions. He has had no time for pleasure, no time for what the world calls relaxation. He has been worshipping his god night and day; he sees it in the light; it is the heaven of his dreams. Let him stand forward! What does God say to him? "Thou wicked and slothful servant! thou knewest, thou oughtest therefore—" That is God's logic,—sharper than a two-edged sword. He takes the word out of the witness's own mouth. He does not superimpose upon a man a new standard of judgment, or force upon him an arbitrary view of things. He listens to the man's own story; shapes the man's own words into a weapon, pierces him with that weapon: "Thou knewest! thou oughtest *therefore*—" That is turning a man upon himself, and making him feel the justness of God through

the very principles and policy which he himself has adopted and pursued.

Let the eloquent man be judged, the man who has made the uses of speech his study from his earliest days. Hear his statement, but fail to follow his example: "I copied with my own hands six times the most voluminous histories of my country, that I might attain to what I supposed were the excellencies of their style. I disqualified myself for appearing in ordinary society by disfiguring my personal appearance, in order that I might bind myself to study by day and practice of speech by night. I have put pebbles in my mouth to cure my stammering; I have run up the steepest hills in the country that I might strengthen my lungs; I have harangued the sea that I might obtain power over tumultuous elements; if you would follow me along the road, walk it as I have done, inch by inch." And he has never thought about God's kingdom—kingdom of light, and life, and truth, and beauty. Hear God! "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest, thought didst understand all about care and pains and discipline and culture, thou oughtest therefore—" And the man has no answer. No man can answer God when he comes face to face with his Maker! He may chaffer with him now; he may utter his little speeches against his Maker now. But when it comes to the last reckoning of all, when a man takes up his life in his hand and says, "This is what I have done," God will point out to the man in his own life the things which will damn and consume him!

It is the same with position. You know how you have laboured for your position: you counted no toil too severe that you might attain your present status. You have even submitted to be snubbed and ignored and slighted. Sometimes you have stooped where you would gladly have stood erect; sometimes you have done things from which your best nature has shrunk; but, you have said, "I want to reach yonder eminence, and I will do it." That is your character. You *can* strive. If you can strive for a bubble, if you can follow a feather, borne away upon the flying winds, why not strive to enter in at the strait gate? If you could not have got into any other kingdom without strife, contention, discipline, and if you have undergone these that you might enter an inferior kingdom, by your own words you shall be judged and condemned if you have not taken the kingdom of heaven by violence! God yields to the violent. Omnipotence gives itself into the hands of importunity. Observe, then, that the day of judgment will be a very severe day for those of us who are proceeding upon the supposition that any answer will do for God.

What is this kingdom of which we have been speaking? It is called the Kingdom of Life. Jesus Christ has said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." There are two gates, and only two. Two roads, and only two. Two destinies, and only two. The gate, the way leading to *destruction*,—the way leading to *life*. So, then, out of Christ we do not live. I wish we could lay hold upon that doctrine more truly and

understand it more profoundly. It would give us, I had nearly said, a new theology. It would be new in as much as many an incrustation would be thrown off, and we should get back to Christ's own stand-point. Christ says, "Wickedness is death." Christ says, "I am come that ye might have life." But surely we live? We are men, we are scholars, we are statesmen, we are poets,—surely we live? No. You show your capacity to live; you show that there is a germ in you which Jesus Christ can touch into immortality, and glorify into the very splendour of God's own being and image. A man is only a splendid animal, at his best estate, if he have not had infused into him the life, the immortality of Christ. Brethren, let us preach this: That a man may be developed and Darwinised up to the highest possible point, and then he is only a decorated nothing, an empty palace, if he be not in Christ, linked on to God, saved by the redemption of Christ's Cross! This idea stirs me with the holiest, gladest emotion: it makes the world quite a new world to me; it gets rid of a thousand little objections which I dare not name in the pulpit, but which in my study have beeen gnawing at my heart and impairing my strength. "Strait is the gate, narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life." It must be a difficult thing for some men with great grasp of mind, of wonderful attainments, of reading, of knowledge, of wisdom, which many of us admire and covet,—it must be a difficult thing for them to think that they do not *live.* They have got to the very highest point in the lower kingdom; there is nothing more to be done there. The question now is: Will you have life according to the interpretation of the Son of God or will you not? He that believeth shall be saved. Saved, transferred, continued, immortalized, glorified. He that believeth not shall go back, shall lose himself little by little, lose himself in great breadths, shall be cut down, shall wither away! "Yea, I sought him and he could not be found."

That is a terrible doctrine to preach as far unbelievers are concerned. It may be light to those who do not know what life is. But when God judges a man, turns the man's own life upon him as a frown and a condemnation, it will be found to be a terrible, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. My soul, go not thou into that secret! Know, man, that death will have thee! There is a death that will find us all out. It depends upon our moral condition whether that death shall be to us welcome or unwelcome. We are all hastening to one meeting place. You who are on the mountain top yonder, golden with the light of the morning; you who are in the dark, dank, wet valley, where the trees are dripping and the road is steep; you who are walking though garden land, beautiful and flowery and fragrant; you who are knee-deep in snow, or are going through the arid burning desert sand;—we shall all come face to face at one solemn rendezvous! Are we prepared for that death? We cannot escape it. I know you are young and strong and stalwart, and defiant in many a mood. But, sir, death will have you! He will blanch your ruddy cheek, extinguish the fire of your eye, and say to the heart, Stand still! That is a fact, and we ought to make some use of it. We are prepared for it or we are not prepared. No man is prepared for it, according to the New Testament

teaching, but he who is in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. If so be we are in Christ Jesus, then death is abolished,—we have not to die in any sense of the term which degrades and terrifies us. We have to be transferred; we have to put out our wings and flee away; we have to step over a trembling shadow. Christ hath abolished death, and because our eye is on the far shining light of his immortality, we shall not see death when it comes to us to tell us that it is time to go home! "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But some poor trembling soul says, "Have I not read these words, 'Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able'?" Yes. We read these words in our lesson this morning; but did you not observe the next verse, which is the key and explanation to the whole? This verse: "When once the Master of the house has risen up and hath shut to the door,"—then many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. *But not till then. Then* they will say, "Lord, Lord!" And Christ will answer, "I never knew you." What terrifies you, therefore, need be a terror no longer; because the door is open, the gate is open, the road is ready. Christ waits to be gracious. But "the Sun of grace, once set, shall rise no more." Speed thee, ere the door be shut!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 4, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

"Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them."—St. Matthew, xxi., 2, 3.

A STRANGE conjunction of words indeed is this, namely,—*Lord* and *need*. Lord indicates supremacy, authority, sway. Necessity is a beggar's word, not a lord's. But such is all life. Every man has his need, the highest as well as the lowest. Whosoever will come into human conditions; whosoever will socialise himself according to the laws of human organisation—whatsoever be his title, authority, supremacy—must, now and again, know the meaning of *need*. It is well it should be so. It equalises men; at certain points at least it excites and consolidates the truest sympathies of our nature; it opens opportunities for the least to serve the greatest; it enables the greatest to stoop with graceful condescension to accept an offering of the weakest and lowest. Things are much better distributed than we sometimes imagine. If a man be low and have next to nothing,—what if he be not conscious of any capacity much beyond what he is?

And if a man have fine sensibilities and great capacities; what if he, by the power and faithfulness of love, can turn a few loaves and one or two fishes into a great banquet,—what if he carry with him this power of multiplication, which is always turning the little into the great and causing the wilderness to blossom as a rose?

The Lord hath need. There is but one Lord. That appears to be a very simple statement, easy of credence. It is one of the most difficult things in the world to believe that in the heart. Let a man have a conviction, intelligent, profound, unchangeable, that there is but one Lord, and his life becomes elevated: he has law, he has light, he has a throne in his life which is continually appealing to his loyalty and securing the services of his affection. There are lords many,—nay, they are but lordlets! There is but one Lord, one God, one Lawgiver. Hear, oh Israel, let thy worship be conducted and regulated by the announcement,—"The Lord our God is one Lord," so there may be no debate about the direction of our worship, about the owner of our powers, about the redeemer of our souls. See how this operates in practical life. The disciples might naturally feel some little difficulty about going to take another man's property; so the Lord said unto them, "If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say the Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them." But suppose there had been a thousand lords, the question would have arisen, which of them? But there is one Lord, and his name is the key which opens every lock; his name is the mighty power which beats down every mountain and every wall, and makes the rough places plain. What poetry there is here! Why, this is the very poetry of faith. It is not mere faith; it is faith in flower, faith in blossom, faith in victory! And straightway, immediately, without misgiving or hesitation, he will send them! This must have incurred a very great risk. No man likes to put himself into the hands of his inferiors in that way, except he be urged thereto by the assurance that stooping is rising. No man would like his servant to come back to him with his promise and assurance, and say, "They have been despised and broken; the man will not send what you have desired."

We never live sublimely till we live in the poetry of faith, till our faith becomes music and victory. This is the picture of a day which has yet to dawn upon the world. The time will come when a word will be enough; if the word be the right word, it need not be multiplied. Its force is in its unity; its victory is in its intensity and concentration. Is this possible,—that we shall have but to say to the poet, when he has his harp in fullest sublimest tune, "The Lord hath need of thee," and at once he will begin the praise of Emanuel? Is it possible that the time will come when we shall need to say to the man of money but one word, "The Lord hath need of thy gold," and the coffers which have not seen the daylight for many a year will fly open at the utterance of that simple word? when we shall have but to go to the young man of education and intellectual power and say, "The Lord hath need of thee," and instantly he will spring to the front and say, "Lord, speak, thy servant heareth." Is it possible that the time can ever come when we shall have but to say to the daily newspaper, that last of the atheists, "The Lord hath need of thee," and we shall have less

of the drama and the racing-ground and the billiard table, and a little more at least of that which saves England from damnation and the highest life of the world from putrefaction? *That* will be the victory of victories!

I took up a newspaper this morning, and I found in small capitals, and in a nice little corner, "British and Foreign Bible Society," and perhaps a paragraph as long as the palm of your hand recording the annual meeting of the Bible Society. I turn over to the leader page, the best type in the production, and find full two columns about "the Dorking coach." Aye, a Dorking coach against the Bible, certainly! Yet that paper lives upon men who believe in the Bible, who uphold great principles, and suffer disgrace and humiliation for their creed,—yet they are to be snubbed and shelved in that way! I looked into this morning's paper for the report of a great conference which I was unable to attend, and the result of which I was the more anxious to learn, called "The Liberation Society Conference," to which was added a public meeting. I find a report to this effect:—That Mr. E. Miall, M.P.,—whoever that may be—addressed the meeting. That is all! Two columns about the Dorking coach, and two columns about the drama, and a column or more about horse-racing. Is it right? The shame be theirs! The Bible Society, the Missionary Society, and Protestant Nonconformity will live and flourish—and so will all other Christian institutions, Episcopalian and Congregational, which are good and wise—when the Dorking coach has fallen to pieces. It will, then, one day only be necessary to say, "The Lord hath need of thee," and straightway, with instancy, spontaneousness, and love, everything will be given up to Him. Day of the Lord come quickly!

"All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."—4, 5.

The fulfilment of minute prophecies. Not the fulfilment of sublime predictions, so called; but the fulfilment of little, specific, minute, detailed prophecies. God does nothing unnecessarily, speaks nothing that seems exaggeration or superabundance. There is a meaning in the most delicate tint with which he hath varied any leaf; there is a significance in the tiniest drop of dew which ever sphered itself in beauty on the eyelids of the morning. And that Christ should go into Jerusalem upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass! That is not decorative talk; that is not mere flowery prophecy, or incidental or tributary foretelling. In all that we should account little and of inconsequential moment is fulfilled to the letter. What then? If God be careful of such crumbs of prophecy, such little detailed lines of prediction, what of the life of his children, the redeemed life of his church? If not one tittle could fall to the ground respecting things of this kind—matters of order, arrangement, sequence—is he unrighteous to forget the greater when he remembers the less? Will he count the hairs upon your head, and let the head itself be bruised? Will he paint the grass, and let the man fall to decay? Is he careful about birds floating in the air, and careless about lives redeemed by the sacrificial blood of his Son? The argument is an argument *a fortiori*. If he can do this for the little, what of

the great? If he can fulfil this testimony about the ass, and the colt the foal of an ass, and the particular method of going into a city, what will he do when he comes to the question of delivering the souls of his children from captivity and saving the hearts of those who have put their trust in him? See! Christian reader and Christian sufferer, man often bent down to the dust by reason of heavy burdens: I find in this care about the minutest lines of prophecy an assurance by implication that they are infinitely safe who are in their Father's keeping.

"And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way, And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."—8, 9.

What is your religion if it have no enthusiasm in it? Who wants a wooden christianity or a logical christianity only? Christianity loses its power when it loses its pathos. Every religion goes downward when it loses the power of exciting the highest, most intelligent, and most courageous enthusiasm. Some of us have need to be cautioned against decorum. Alas! there are some christian professors who do not know what it is to have a moment of transport and ecstasy, unutterable emotion,—who never, never go away upon the wings of light and hope, but are always standing, almost shivering,—eating up their dry logic, and never knowing where the blossom, the poetry, and the ecstacy may be found.

I heard not long ago of a minister who sustained a serious loss. Observe, a serious loss. I suppose in a moment of excitement—yet such a man ought not to know much about uncontrollable excitement, seeing that he reads his sermons—he uttered in the pulpit the word "bully," and the same evening a serious family took hymn-books and cushions away. It was a serious loss! But there are some men—I don't know how far they are to be blamed—who never feel a rush of blood to their cheeks, whose hearts never did beat double life, and who are never in the fullest and the highest emotion. It is a mercy that they have common sense enough left to take the cushions away. If that grain of common sense were taken away from them, truly they would be a burden to the church. Christianity should excite our emotion and make us sometimes talk rapturously, and give us, sometimes at least, moments of inspiration, self-deliverance, and victory. It was so in the case before us. The whole city was moved. There was passion, there was excitement on every hand.

But, then, am I advocating nothing but emotion, sensibility, enthusiasm? Far from it. First of all, let there be intelligent apprehension, and profound conviction respecting truth. Let us see that our foundations, theological and ethical, are deep, broad, immovable. Then let us carry up the building until it breaks out into glittering points, far-flashing pinnacles, and becomes broken into beauty. You, young man, how is it with you? I do not like to see an old man at five-and-twenty. I don't like to hear a preacher only five-and-twenty talk as if he were seventy-five. I like the young preacher to be young; to be talking sometimes perhaps about glittering stars, meandering rills, and nobody knows what. All that will be taken out of him in the course

of twenty years. In the meantime, I do like to see the young man capable of taking fire, and saying some things that cold critics would look upon very disparagingly. Always let me be understood as advocating, under all this, seriousness of conviction, clear apprehension of truth. Then as to the expression of that truth, I would allow you oftentimes the liberty some critics might consider license.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."—12, 13.

He is not carried away by popular enthusiasm. He does not live on popular applause. After all this he comes to what is right, the spirit of indignation burns within him when he sees any prostitution of sacred things. It is a perilous thing for some men to be applauded. Popular admiration is to some men a snare. Loud resounding applause may upset their balance, destroy their equilibrium, and lead them to cater for the people who have applauded them. But Jesus Christ steps out of all this thunder, goes into the temple, and at once proceeds to destruction, assertion of right, and a vindication of great principle. What he might have done! He might have said, "Well, this temple will one day, and that day not far distant, be thrown down. I shall not interfere with this abuse now, because in the natural order of things it will be overturned along with this structure." Jesus Christ did not know what it was to trifle so. I don't know that Jesus Christ knew the meaning of the word expediency, as we sometimes prostitute it. He saw wrong. If that wrong would in five minutes work itself out, that was no consideration to him. Meanwhile, to him five minutes was eternity!

The wrong was not a cutaneous stain; it was an insult to God, a defiance of the Most High. We shall never get through life truly, grandly, worthily of our profession, till we take our stand upon simple right, and do it in God's spirit and in God's fear. They were sacred places, you say, to Jesus Christ. I believe there are men who could trifle with places which are known to most of us as sacred resorts. I have seen men who could come into church and walk half way up the aisles with their hats on their heads. I have seen persons who felt themselves perfectly at home—that is, as much at home as they could feel themselves anywhere—in a sanctuary as they would upon a public common. I do not urge a superstitious reverence for any place; but there ought to be a distinction between superstitious reverence and flippant off-handed treatment. Somewhere there ought to be sobriety, veneration, self-control. This house is made holy, not by any form or words devised by man,—but the holy quiet, the holy hymn, the cry of prayer, the exposition of God's book, separates such places as these from the common world, and makes them emphatically houses of prayer. How this veneration is utilised will be seen in the very next verse:—

"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them."—14.

See what his veneration was! He had just declared, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." The blind and the lame came to

him in the temple and he healed them. Prayer is not an exclusive term, when the deepest needs of human nature are in question. Prayer is an inclusive term. It includes philanthropic service, educational service, missionary work, feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, showing the blind the right way, and breaking the bread of life to the hungry hearts of sinners. We might make more use of the temple than we do. As the minister of this house, I should like to make far more use of it than we do. The idea of locking the doors almost six days out of seven, and opening them for only three hours on the Sabbath, seems to involve a great loss of property which might be turned to the highest account. As we are situated in the heart of the Metropolis of England, I should open the door all day long and all week through. I should knock down all this wood-work, and have a fountain of water in tbe very midst of the building,—forms and tables throughout with Bibles laid upon them. Men might be at liberty to come in here any hour of the day, to read the scriptures, rest themselves, to secure half an hour's quietness amid the din and bustle and tumult of the noisy city. Then, three or four times a week I should have a minister of the gospel who, in a few clear, simple, manly sentences, should declare that just outside time there is a world called Eternity, and the only true entrance into that invisible world is across Golgotha, where Jesus Christ, Son of God, tasted death for every man. I should call that making use of a chapel. It would save building, save money, save anxiety, and at least offer an opportunity to men to recover their strength and their spirits, and to get some hint amid all this bread-getting, that there is bread which endureth unto everlasting life.

"And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"—15, 16.

The children crying in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," sorely displeased the chief priests and the scribes. I dare say they never were children themselves. Some men never were born. I don't know how they came into the world; all you can say about them is what you can say about a walking-stick,—there it is. Children in the temple—children taking part in the service! The scribes and chief priests thought the children could not understand it. What a miserable mistake we make about this understanding things. Why, it is not necessary to understand everything intellectually, and to be able to give reasons in logical order for all that we are and for all that we do. Children understand by feeling, by the heart, a good many more things than they can explain. So it is with what are called poor uneducated hearers of the gospel. I dare say there are men—at least there were, I believe—who thought that if they expended all their strength upon their sermons the people would not understand them, so they just treated them to anything that came to hand; and the people left them. Then they said that they were not appreciated! I believe uneducated hearers do understand the very highest ministry,—the ministry that has light in it, and pathos, and sublimity; and the children's heart-understanding brings them to the house

of God whenever there is present a man who can any way get at them, excite their little hearts, rouse their tender feelings, and make them glad. The child does not understand, then, about baptism? No. I believe that is perfectly true as to understanding. What is it I baptize when the little child is brought to me? Do I baptize something that is only six weeks old? No. I baptize human life; it is the life I baptize, and not the register of birth! I am not here as an insurance agent, but as a christian minister; and as soon as I can get hold of human life, I baptize it in the great threefold Name that makes all other names names of life.

Jesus Christ did hear them. The chief priests and scribes thought that perhaps he did not hear the children. They said unto Him, "Hearest thou what these say?" And Jesus Christ said, "Yes, I hear it—every tone of it, every pulse of it—I hear it all." Then he turned upon them this enquiry, which was humiliating because they were priests and scribes, "Have ye never read? If you are not readers you are nothing,—it is your business to read. Have ye never read that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" How Jesus Christ read the prophecies! They were quite new things when he read them. Nothing is so difficult to do, I think, as correctly to read something which somebody else has written. Therefore, I always say to friends, "Never write a letter if you can help it, because nobody can read it." I have written letters to people, and they have been offended with them, and they have not spoken to me for six weeks,—perhaps gone on the other side of the street,—and I have not known how to account for it. It has come to pass that I have written them a letter which has given them great offence. "Let me see the letter." I read the letter to them, and it is a new letter! They did not read it so; they had missed their stops, and misplaced the emphasis. They did say every word that was in the letter, but not as the writer intended the words to be said. Herein is the glory of preaching over writing,—that every man by his very tone is an interpreter, and by his very accent is a revealer, of divine things. There is this difference between Jesus Christ's reading of the prophecies and other peoples' reading. Other people read them as scholars; read them with the help, it may be, of lexicon or grammar; read them as literary exercises. But when Jesus Christ read them, he read them as if he himself had written them!

I am sorry I cannot proceed further to-day with questions for self-examination. Christ entered into the city. Has he come to our poor hearts? Jesus Christ turned out the money-changers and those that bought and sold doves. Has he expelled the worldly principle from the temple of our spirits? Jesus Christ was hailed with enthusiasm. Have we received him with tenderness and emotion and transport of love? Jesus Christ interpreted the prophecies. Are we accepting his interpretation or forming meanings of our own? These questions I must leave. May they be remembered and applied by some!

The Prayer.

Oh, Thou who art merciful and gracious, full of compassion and long-suffering and tenderness, Thou art kind to the unthankful and to the evil! We hasten to Thee with our offering of praise, inasmuch as Thou hast crowned our life with loving kindness and tender mercy and made it beautiful with continual love. We praise Thee; we magnify Thee; we offer Thee the whole strength of our heart. We hasten to Thee as men who have been mocked by the promises of the world, and who long to find satisfaction in Thy infinite and unspeakable peace. We have been disappointed. The staff has been broken in our hand and pierced us. We mistook the scorpion for an egg. We have hewn unto ourselves cisterns; they are broken cisterns, which can hold no water. Foiled, smitten, wounded, humiliated, and disgraced, we come into Thy presence, knowing that in God, as revealed in the person and doctrine of Jesus Christ and made known unto us by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, we can find rest which our souls could not find elsewhere. All our springs are in Thee. Thou givest us what we need. They who are in Thy presence, who live in Thy light, and Thy love, hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither are subjected to weariness or decay. We would live in God. We would have our being in the Eternal. We would know nothing among men but Jesus, and him crucified; and by the mystery of pain and the mystery of love, symbolised by Christ's Cross, we would endure the trials of the world, and discharge the whole service of life. Meet us as sinners, and pardon us! "The blood of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, cleanseth from all sin." May we know its cleansing, healing power! We have done the things we ought not to have done; we have withheld the testimony which it became us to deliver; we have often been timid and unfaithful; we have hesitated when we ought to have gone forward; we have compromised where we ought to have died; we have become self-seekers where we ought to have sought the crown of martyrdom; we have kept an unjust balance and an untrue weight; our measure has been false; our word has been untrue; our spirit has been worldly; our very prayers have been selfish. All this we say when we truly know ourselves, as we are revealed to ourselves by the in-dwelling, all-disclosing Spirit. "God be merciful unto us sinners," and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! Give us the hearing ear, and the understanding heart, the obedient will, the ever-industrious hand in the service of Jesus Christ. When we have done our best to serve our day and generation, and the time of reckoning has come, may we find all our worth in the worthiness of the Lamb, and be accounted fit to sit with Him on His throne, because in our degree we have shared the pain and shame of His Crucifixion! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 11, 1871.

(THE SEVENTY-NINTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE CONVICTION OF SIN.

"And when he is come he will reprove the world of sin."—John, xvi., 8.

WHEN He that is the spirit of truth is come, He will reprove, He will convince the world of sin. He will show the sinfulness of sin; he will work in every sinner's heart the torment of self-conviction. He will accuse the world of sin, and will prove the accusation. The work of the Holy Ghost, in reference to sin, is first a work of revelation and then a work of conviction. He will show sin to the sinner,—show it until the sinner is startled, ashamed, self-pierced, self-condemned. The Holy Ghost will reveal the unholy man. The revelation of sin is distinctly and specially a spiritual

act. It can be done completely, with all necessary clearness and terribleness, only by a Ghost, and only by a Ghost that is Holy, and only by a holiness that is perfect as God. The Ghost of God sees things as they are; sees essences, realities, hidden tendencies, remote possibilities; sees the soul in its nakedness, and knows the thought of man afar off. When that Ghost comes into any heart, he will reprove, convince that heart of sin.

Let us try to work our way to some approximate idea at least of the intensity and agony of that conviction. Take the case of a man who is reeling in the streets under the influence of intoxication. That man does not require the Holy Ghost to convince him of sin. There is no common man on the road side that would not instantly turn upon him and say, "That is a sinner." No ghost is needed to make such a revelation. Every child, seeing the reeling man coming near, will instantly feel that he is in the presence of a sinner. God is not required to come down to the earth and say to the drunkard in his drunkenness, "You are a sinner;" to the blasphemer in the madness of his profanity, "You are a sinner;" to the adulterer in his uncleanness, "You are a sinner." All these things are known by the common morality, the non-christian instinct which is in every man, and which teaches him to distinguish—though not always minutely and spiritually—between right and wrong.

Let us dismiss all those foul and vicious characters whose moral nature is plainly written on their foreheads, and look in the next place at a person of the utmost social respectability. Examine his conduct from week to week in the market-place, and there is not a man who comes in contact with him who can justly bring any charge against his behaviour. The man is diligent in business, punctual in his appointments, straightforward in all his dealings; a man who, by the continuousness of his probity, has earned for himself a position of confidence in the commercial world; his speech is the speech of an honourable man, so far as all the affairs of this world are concerned, and so far as his intercourse on matters of business is concerned. He is a member of a christian church; he sometimes engages in prayer; he contributes to charitable objects. Altogether, I repeat, he is a man of the utmost social respectability. What is required to convince that man of the real state of his heart? A ghost! If you and I were to speak to him, taking cognisance of his character, he might resent the intrusion, and dare comparison of our own life with his daily conduct and behaviour. The Holy Ghost enters him, and finds in him a faint trace of lust, evil desire, having reference to some forbidden object or other. The man never named it, never confessed it to himself, never ventured to whisper it in the most subdued breath. But there it is, in the depths of his nature; and the Ghost of God works upon that, reveals it, develops it, shows what it really is, expands it in all its horribleness,—until the man whose outward character was irreproachable, whose behaviour could challenge comparison with the average behaviour of the world, trembles, burns under the influence of an internal fire, and dare hardly fall down upon his knees to ask God to forgive an enormity so great! He never would have known what that faint, hardly describable vein of evil desire was

but for the ministry of the Holy Ghost. He would shrink from the presence of an unclean person; he would denounce in the most emphatic terms the irregularities of the drunkard; he would shudder when he heard the profanities of the blasphemer. But the Ghost of God cut him in twain, and pierced even to the dividing asunder of all within him that was secret and most compact, and took up this vein and said, "That is you!" until a speck became a mountain, until a single speck, an atomic, microscopic speck—nay, such a microscopic speck as the eye of God alone could discern—grew into proportions overshadowing and overwhelming. And the man, outwardly so respected, praying in prayer meetings and giving to charities, cried out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" No man can come to that experience—can know anything at all about it in its torment, in its killing agony—until the Holy Ghost has been at work upon his heart.

Here is a man who is equally respectable—a man of excellent standing, a man against whom nobody can utter a single reproach justly, a man equally honourable and upright and straightforward with the man whom we have just delineated. The Holy Ghost comes into him and shows in him a secret, subtle, unexpressed selfishness, in ways that the world cannot take note of. Remote acts of selfishness? Nay, not acts; when it comes to acts then anybody can sit in judgment upon them. But thoughts of selfishness,—little, tormenting, urging, importuning dreams of selfishness,—something between a thought and a thing, trembling, hovering in that border-land,—sometimes almost personifying itself, then shrinking back again into impalpability! The Holy Ghost shows him what he would be under certain circumstances, if certain fears could be taken away, if certain possibilities could be set aside,—all that unspeakable atmospheric spiritual pressure which never can be defined and only can be felt. And when he sees the thing in its reality, as illuminated and expanded by God the Holy Ghost, all his cry is, "God be merciful to me a sinner! Nobody thinks me a sinner. I can walk up the main aisle of the church to-morrow and there would be subdued applause at my presence. Many a man would speak well of me if called to testify in open court concerning my standing. But oh! Thou God the Holy Ghost—thou piercing, cleaving Spirit—thou hast shown in me one hidden vein that I never knew of, and I see it in the blaze of Thy fire! God be merciful to me a sinner!"

The great difficulty in conducting spiritual education in our own hearts, and in the hearts of those who wait upon our ministry, is this: To see the difference between sin and phases of sin; between wickedness in the heart, in the thought, unexpressed and unconfessed to ourselves, and the mere accidents of wickedness which relate to time, place, or form. There is not one in this house who would not condemn worldliness of spirit, so called; condemn, perhaps, certain amusements which other people accept with all innocence and with legitimate enjoyment. There are men who say the church is fast becoming like the world; men who will not play at this game, or go to that amusement, or sit in this society, or identify themselves with yonder movement, because they suppose that all these things savour more or less of world-

liness. Very well. One of these men who is so unworldly and so exemplary shall be heard in his tea-table talk. He says unkind words about his neighbour; slanders his minister; is a sneak when sneaking will win him what he calls success; he is a traitor when treachery will bring him thirty pieces of silver, more or less; there is no meanness he would not stoop to; there is no length of censure and censoriousness to which he will not go. Yet that man condemns another who rides on a fine horse and goes to find some of his amusement in a painted house! What is required to show the man what he really is? The Ghost of God, to show him that an unkind whisper may be murder; that a shrug of the shoulder may be incipient assassination; to take him by the heart, and condemn him in the sight of God, for a villainy too refined for common morality and too subtle to be taken note of by any of the magisterial tribunals of the land! Only the Holy Ghost can pierce a man with such reflections and convictions as these. It is not the profane oath, it is the profane heart; it is not the open, overt, deadly deed, it is the feeling of needless, exaggerated, unrighteous anger; it is not the hand wet with blood, it is the spirit that longs for some measure of revenge and some degree of retaliation. It is when we get into these essences of thought that the Holy Ghost alone can be our perfect teacher, showing us what sin is without its accidents of time, place, and form,—the wickedness of sin in the sight of the holiness of God.

Here is another man who gravely shakes his head at the idea of half-a-dozen shops being opened on Sunday, and he shakes his head in in a cab. A nice place to shake his head in at what is called desecration of the Lord's Day! He has a little four-wheeled shop of his own, and shakes his head at the greengrocer who is trying to sell a few cabbages and cauliflowers and other vegetables. "We compound for sins we are inclined to by damning those we have no mind to." We want the Holy Ghost to get into that man's cab to talk to him the language of God. Far be it from me to lay down the doctrine that it may not be necessary for a man to ride mile after mile on the Lord's Day. But if a man is on the one hand so critical about other people's observance of the Sabbath, he ought to be visited with his own reasoning and chastised with his own rod.

We have to guard against seeing the sinfulness of other people without seeing the beam that is in our own eye. We need the Holy Ghost to talk to us on these matters. We are so sensitive in some particulars, we shudder so revoltingly in the presence of certain forms of sin, without perhaps feeling that sin, if it never took form at all or was never heard in speech at all, is as hateful in the sight of God as if it came out in the blaze of day and defied the judgment of nations. The religion of Christ is spiritual, the religion of Christ is intense, the word of God searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men. Who then can be saved? If the blink of an eye may mean profanity, uncleanness, rebellion against law, determination of secret enjoyment of sin; if the holding up of a finger be in God's estimation, under some circumstances, terrible as the drawing out of a sword and the defiance

of the Most High; if he searches our thoughts, if he reveals the secrets of our hearts,—who then can be saved? "I never oppressed the poor; but I once had a thought which must have broken the heart of God. I never uttered a profane word; but once I gave a look that was blasphemy! I have prayed long vehement prayers; in my heart I have had desires I dare not name to woman, priest, or God." If a man's experience be anything like that, and that experience be illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and forced back again upon the man,—oh! how terrible the accusation,—how heart-breaking! Who then can be saved?

Now, if this doctrine be laid down, and in the heart be deeply and intensely realised, four consequences will follow. All attempts to establish life upon a basis of mere morality will be abandoned. Morality is impossible apart from theology. Theology is impossible apart from the direct spiritual continuous teaching of God the Holy Ghost. You say, "I challenge you to criticise my deeds." I reply, "Sir, it is not first and last a question of deeds: it is a question of motive, intent, impulse, secret desire." "Have not I given fifty pounds to this charity?" You have with your hand, but not a penny with your heart: it is what is given with the heart God accepts. "Have not I prayed often and long?" Yes; but never a word went beyond the roof under which you uttered your empty mocking words, because whilst your lips were eloquent your heart was dumb. The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh on the outward appearance; the Lord looketh on the heart. Where, then, is our morality? which, being interpreted, is our system of manners, our way—often, indeed, a skilful and artistic way—of putting our life into certain angles and showing it under given lights. Morality is often but an effort of art. Morality is often a study of the way of putting things. But the sincere man—the man who lives in the tabernacle and sanctuary of God—never says, "How will this look?" His life gushes out of him into activity and form and service; and knowing that his spirit and motive are right, he says, "It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment."

Some of us have taken a long time to be persuaded that our morality is less than nothing and vanity,—our chief sin. Not until we get rid of our morality can we be made moral. It is that overweening conceit about our own nice way of doing things that keeps us back from the Cross of Christ, from the mystery of the Atonement. "If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness." If our very morality be our curse, how ponderous is the millstone which will drag us into the depths of the sea! Not until a man comes without price in his hand, without self-hope in his heart, without self-praise in his mind and says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," can he ever know how worthless is his own morality, how despicable and vain are his noblest deeds.

> "In my hand no price I bring,
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

The man confesses himself a sinner—not much of a sinner, not

a sinner in certain lights and in certain degrees, not a sinner hardly so sinful as other people—but a sinner! Vast in its concentration is that confession. Overwhelming is that utterance in its very simplicity. When men feel themselves to be what the Spirit of God describes them as being, they want no epithet, no adjective, no quantifying term to define their position. A *sinner* says more in its simplicity and concentration than could be said by the minutest elaboration of speech.

Where the true idea of sin is realised under the ministry of God the Holy Ghost, the necessity of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ will be understood, realised, and will form the one foundation of human hope. I have much to say on this point and I cannot say it. For years the idea has been floating before my mind, and I have found no words to speak it to others; but it is the stay of my life, it is the strength of my ministry, it is the secret of any earnestness I may feel in preaching the everlasting gospel, namely this: The Atonement I do not receive merely as a grammarian, logician, metaphysician, theologian. I cannot understand that Cross—great, rugged, melancholy Cross—if I look at it only from the eminence occupied by the scholar, the philosopher, the theologian. But when I feel myself in my heart of hearts a sinner, a trespasser of God's law and God's love; when I feel that a thought may damn me to everlasting destruction, that a secret unexpressed desire may shut me out of heaven and make me glad to go to hell to be out of the way of God's shining face,—then some man tells me that Jesus Christ was wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities, that the chastisment of my peace was laid upon him; and I, pressing my way through all the grammarians, logicians, philosophers, theologians, say, "If I perish I will pray, and perish only at the foot of the Cross; for if this be not sufficient, it hath not entered into the heart of man to solve the problem of human depravity and human consciousness of sin."

The sinner does not ask for explanation—minute, critical, and technical—when he comes into that state of heart before the dear bleeding Christ. He leaves all questions of criticism, technical and formal theology, to be settled by and by. In the meantime he feels this:—That if the blood of the Son of God cannot reach those secret sins, those unexpressed desires, then no river that flows through the earth can wash him clean, no detergent discovered by industrious morality can ever take out of him the deep stain and taint! Sometimes we look at the work of the Lamb of God without feeling that we are sinners. Then we have a thousand difficult questions to put about it. At other times the burden of our sin is so heavy upon us, we see the sinfulness of sin so clearly, we get away so entirely from all mere accident of time, place, and shape, so far as they relate to sin,—we see sin as God saw it and as God ever must see it, then we say, "Oh Lamb of God, Thou didst not shed one drop too much of Thy precious blood, Thou didst not endure one needless pang! We see sin now in some measure as Thou didst see it. We understand what Thou meanest when Thou sayest, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' We know what is meant by the glorious gospel that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!"

If I might speak to brethren in the ministry, students of letters, grammars, philosophers, theorists, and speculators, I would venture to say, that there is much in such studies that may be fruitful of good ; they are not to be contemned and passed by as utterly valueless. At the same time we ourselves as preachers cannot understand the Cross of Christ till we understand ourselves as sinners. No man can be led to the Cross by the hand of mere philosophy. He must go up the dolorous way, with his eyes blinded with penitential tears, his heart choked and suffocated by inexpressible emotion, then there will be a writing above the superscription of Pilate, "This is the Son of God ; whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Wherever this view of sin is truly realised and received in all its simplicity, an intense earnestness for the world's salvation will be excited. Do you ask, "Are the Chinese not happy without your gospel?" I say, Probably they are happy without the gospel, so far as they understand happiness. "Are the people of India not rich and prosperous without the gospel?" Probably they are. Why should you go and break up households and separate the father from the son and the mother from the daughter and the daughter-in-law from the mother-in-law? Why should you send fire upon the earth and a sword through the nations of mankind? I tell you, because of what the Holy Ghost has taught us about sin. It is not a question of civilisation, of a gilded surface, of a material prosperity and of a so-called social happiness. If the Holy Ghost has correctly revealed to us the nature of sin, then I must go, I cannot rest until I have taught other people what has been communicated to me of the spiritual, not of a terrible enormity, not of a bloody deed, not of an outspoken blasphemer, but of secret thoughts and unexpressed desires which are foreign to the nature of God.

This is the secret of our missionary enterprise,—this is the inspiration of our moral service. If it were a question of this world only, let the Chinese alone ! They enjoy themselves after a certain fashion ; they have their own notions of civilisation and success. Don't trouble them. The same with Africa and India ; the same with the most distant portions of the globe. Let them alone ! But when we know, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, what sin is, a responsibility comes along with the revelation ; and in proportion as we realise it, that responsibility will never tire of breaking up households if need be, of sending a sword into families and kindling fires upon the earth !

Then, last of all, if we had truly spiritual notions about sin, we should regard one another with a gentler charity. You don't sin as I sin. Shall I therefore vehemently condemn you, and seek a character for my own morality by the urgency and impetuosity of my condemnation of your particular sin? I don't do as you do when you criticise worldliness, but I may speak an unkind word about a brother minister. I will not speak an unkind word about a brother minister, but I may stoop to any ignoble deed in order to realise my own schemes. I will not stoop to any sneaking, underhand method of doing things ; but I may never forgive an enemy, I may pursue him to the

death, and half a century after the deed my anger shall burn as on the first day. Is it so with us? You would not go to a theatre, but you are vain as a peacock. I am not vain, but I will do things in secret that I would not like my dearest, truest, earthly friend to know. So it is, sirs. We must get to know what *sin* is, not the *accident* of sin! We must not be vehement about the accident when we are comparatively indifferent about the essence. When we feel sin to be what it is, our mouths will be shut; there will never be an hour of unkind judgment in our whole lives; we will all be in the same condemnation. Who art thou that speakest against another man? will be a sore question that will pierce us and cut us in two whenever words censorious and slanderous shall rise to our lips.

May God the Holy Ghost show us sin until we hate it,—show us the reality of sin until we feel our need of the Cross! May he show us the fulness of the love of Christ, until we know what is meant by Christ's ability to take up our sin, our secret sin,—take it up in His pierced bleeding hands and cast it away for ever, and present us unto Himself a glorious Church! This is a great mystery, but in Christ all such mysteries are solved. He is, in very deed, the Light of the World!

TO MINISTERIAL STUDENTS.

THE attention of Students in Colleges of *all denominations* is respectfully invited to the following announcement.

On Thursday, May 25th, 1871, Dr. PARKER will be at the Poultry Chapel at two o'clock, for the purpose of inaugurating an Institute of Homiletics. It is his intention to offer, from time to time, brief remarks upon pulpit work generally, to invite inquiry and discussion on the part of Students, and to encourage conversational criticism upon outlines of sermons, composition, pronunciation, reading, and other exercises which the Students will be expected to submit. The object of this Institute is to supply a common meeting ground for Students of all denominations, and to realise such advantages as an unsectarian interchange of opinion may be expected to afford.

Students who intend to be present at the first meeting will oblige by sending their names to Dr. PARKER, Poultry Chapel, as soon as convenient.

No expense will be incurred by Students.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 18, 1871.

(THE EIGHTIETH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

ENQUIRY FOR GODS.

"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim?"—Isaiah, xxxvi., 19.

THESE enquiries may by a slight accommodation be used as showing some characteristics of false gods, and showing, by implication, the glory and worship which are due to the one living Lord. Men have a distinct right to enquire for their gods. Almighty God himself does not shrink from this test of personality and nearness. He will he enquired of. He has proclaimed himself accessible. "Come, now, let us reason together." "Call upon me in the day of trouble." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." "Draw nigh unto him and he will draw nigh unto you." "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord." All these passages show that God is within reach of the heart of man; and that religion, as well as bringing with it a divine fear, brings with it also a divine companionship. Men cannot live on mere sublimity. Tell a man that there is a being seated above the stars mighty and glorious—yea, who is terrible in strength

and dazzling in splendour—and you have told him nothing worth hearing. Your statement is void by generality. God *is* all that. But to be all that, so that it may have any good effect upon man, He must be less than that. Upon the sphere of His infinitude there must be points of love. Man cannot get hold of infinitude. He must have something that he can lay the hands of his heart upon. God must give miniatures of himself, which little children even can put away in the hiding-places of their love as their chief jewels. Whilst a god may be too great, he may also be too small. He may be too great to be available for common daily use and defence. If you want to pass through a toll-bar, and have nothing but a thousand pound note for the payment, you are, so far as that toll-bar is concerned, as badly off as the beggar who has not a penny. A man may die of thirst even amid the billows of the Atlantic. If our god be therefore merely a distant sublimity, a bewildering dream, a creation of poetry, he is no god to us; and one day we shall be taunted by the mocking question, "Where is thy god, O worshipper of the golden mists?" What is a man's god? A man's god is whatever is the supreme object of his admiration and trust. It may be beauty, it may be strength, it may be money, it may be fame, it may be self-righteousness, it may be self-confidence. Now the one principle which it is proposed to illuminate and apply this morning is, that there are times in life when a man instinctively or by force enquires for his god; and that he who cannot, in such critical hours, find his god, has made the profoundest and saddest spiritual mistake in the bestowment of his affections and the gift of his trust. Whilst we give ourselves to this topic, may the Most High God be present with us as we never felt him to be present before, so that the sigh of the heart may reach him and the whisper of our love may be distinct in his ear as the voice of thunder! Amen, amen!

There are times when you are dissatisfied with yourself; when you feel your utter nothingness; exhaustion, not to say insufficiency, but entire vanity and self-vexation. Take a season of utter prostration, of physical pain, of bodily decay, when the strong man is withered, when the strength we used to boast of is strong no longer, and we are afraid of that which is high. At such a time we look out for something greater than ourselves. We put to ourselves these enquiries:—Do all things waste away as our strength has done? Is our weakness the measure of all other power? Is there no one who can meet us in this extremity of feebleness,—who can come down to us, not in the thunder of his great power, but in the condescension of his almightiness? Is there no one who has learned how to come near a weak man without shattering him by the breath of his power? The weak man does not not want mere power to come to him. He wants graduated power,—power that is in the hands of mercy, power that can adapt itself to the weakness and infirmity of human conditions. It is when we can only speak in sighs, and reason in whispers, that our heart goes out in a piercing, urgent enquiry, Where is the god on whom I once did rest the whole pressure of my life, in whom I did place all the trust of my love?

Look at a time of commercial panic, business distress, when no man knows whom to trust; when a smile upon the countenance may be but the signal of intended treachery; when the greatest houses are crumbling at their foundations; when things which were of value yesterday are of no value at all this morning; when men's hearts are quaking because of the fear that they dare not touch their own fortune lest it should prove itself to be gilded nothingness,—when they are afraid that the very glance of an eye will pierce their possessions as lightning might and utterly wither them away. Man cannot be satisfied then without the supernatural; he may even drift into superstition. But into the invisible he will go, if so be he be not an utter beast, and have not lost his power of reasoning and his power of hope in the mammon worship of a misdirected life. I have known atheists pray when they have been in extreme pain or peril. Atheists! men who would say, when the sun was clear and there was blue sky enough for their heart's content, that there was no God. I have known such wretches, tripped up by cellar-grating, pray for their legs, and cry out for God to have mercy upon them. Oh, wretched theologians!

There are times when all men either come quietly, with reverence and tenderness, to seek God who has gone away for a moment, or when they are startled, frightened into momentary devotion. Anyhow, the great principle is affirmed in daily experience, that men do enquire for their gods when the times are heavy against them and there is some special sore cankering and consuming their hearts. Man likes to make gods; he is fond of god-making. What sort of gods does he make? Dare I say this? You will tell me, when I have said it, that it is but a common-place in human history. Alas, sirs! I am afraid when we consider some things to be common-place, we consider we have explained them and defended them. A thing is not right because it is common-place. Familiarity is no vindication of vice. Because we have been long accustomed to a theory or practice, the theory or practice is not therefore unimpeachable, right and true as before God. May I say this? Some men—without perhaps intending it, and who would shrink from this bald way of stating what they have done—have made *money* their God. You thought I was going to say something more startling than that, did you not? The time will come when common-places will startle men; when the mud they have trodden under their feet, and by treading it have buried great principles and holy purposes, will startle them, rise up before them, and make them tremble and quake. Some people have made money their god, and there is not a more helpless god in all the temples of idolatry. Cry aloud, for he is a god! he is talking or walking, hunting or sleeping, pursuing or driving, or anything you please. He will never come to you in the crisis of your life. He will make little compromises with you, help you over divers stiles, solve certain little problems for you. But when your soul is in agony, when your life has wrought itself down to the one last spasm, he will be a dumb god. Having hands, he will not help; having eyes, he will not see; having ears, he will not hear. Who was it? It was certainly not a beggar in the streets,—it was some royal great one who

cried, "Millions of money for an inch of time!" There was an offer! Why, it might have altered the pulse of the money market if the thing had been feasible—it might have changed the vein of financial affairs for the time being. An inch of time—millions of money! And the bargain could not be struck. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. If you could take a five pound note with you across the grave into yonder invisible mysterious world, nobody would know what it was. You would have to explain it, and nobody would believe you. You might hold it up, and show the water-mark, and lecture upon it, and turn it round and round, and nobody could change it. Yet there are some men who practically, not theoretically, have made this money their god, and have said they will run unto this money as into a strong tower in the time of storm and flood and tempest and great trial.

There is another god that some men are making. I think, perhaps, a great many young men may be engaged in this manufacture. It took me some little time before I dare put the name of this god upon my notes. Last of all I wrote it in capitals, for it is a true name. *Luck!* It is a little English word. Shall I say it again? Luck! Some men have faith in their luck. They say, "Things will not turn out so badly after all. I have always being able to get upon the sunny side of the road, and something will occur to get me upon that side again. I have trusted the chapter of accidents. My chances have always turned out right, and they will turn out right again." There never was so mocking an idol as luck. Have you seen a great picture, which is on view this very day, of a scene in a gambling place, where everything seems to depend upon the shuffling of certain pieces of ivory or brass, on the doing of certain things in a skilful, quick way, when a wrong turn may mean utter waste of fortune and dispossession of estate and inheritance? Have you seen what expression there is upon the countenances of the parties engaged,—what anxiety, what wonder, what hope, what pride, in some cases what shadowing despair, despair just begun, hope just going away? Yonder I can see a little fringe of light, and despair just coming on. It is the god luck that is tormenting his soul. But the young man who throws in a game of that kind and is lucky, will have another game to play. He has another competitor who will force him, and say, "Now you must have the dice out again." The name of that last competitor is Death, and he will play you. The young man says, "I don't want to play." Death grasps him by the throat, and says, "You *shall* play!" Now he gets hold of his dice-box, and Death always wins. You see how strong we are when we teach according to the revelation of God and the facts of nature. There is a point where you cannot escape us. There are thousands of miles where we can have something like an equal fight, and you can throw us in the tussle, but when we come up to this last point of all you cannot get away! He is only a spectre, but you cannot toss him; a shadow, but you cannot dodge him; a grim thing, that you say you could smash. Try it! What will you do when you come to that last game of all. to close this strange eventful history? Where is your god then? Where is all the old fortune of chance and happy luck and sunny accident? Once you had only to touch a thing

and it became gold. Other men threw bargains down because they could make nothing of them, and you went and picked them up and instantly they blossomed and flowered into beauty and success. Ha! where is your luck now? Granted that some men may have drilled themselves into the power of laughing their way out of the world. Let us suppose—although by doing so we insult all divine power and truth—but let us suppose that, last of all, a man could snap his finger at God and eternity and Heaven and hell, and go out of the world as a merry dancer might whirl out of a lamp-lit room. What of it? Who dare risk it? No wise man who knows life, and is sensible on ordinary affairs, dare make up his mind to be at last a fool like that.

Some men's god is a *well-favoured countenance.* They trust to their shape, figure, bearing, expression. They say, "My countenance is an introduction, a certificate, a guarantee. Wherever I go a space is cleared for me." There are men who trust to outward figure and expression of countenance; who believe that one look of the eyes means conquest. And many a man who does not make a good show in the flesh, but who has an honest and true heart, who is gold all through and through his soul, is sneered at by this man of a well-favoured person, of ruddy countenance, of face that is a key to confidence and a passport to admiration! A very superficial god, by the way! I can imagine such persons brought into circumstances which will try their god severely.

Yonder is a man lofty in stature, portly in bearing, commanding in all the attributes of external person. He says that he feels a pain piercing him: he laughs, and says, Presently it will be gone! But that great chest of his has a second stab inflicted upon it, and back it goes, and his shoulders come up. His friends who were once proud of him hardly know him; and he says, in a voice no longer with the old ringing tone, "Take me home." He is taken home, and betakes himself to his bed. His physician comes to his room and says, "This is a case of small-pox." "No!" "It is." Aye, and that god of his will be dug in the face till the man's mother won't know him, and the sister who loved him best will pray to escape from his presence. It may be so. God can blotch your skin! God can send poison into your blood! And you, who sneered at ungainly virtue, at unfavoured honesty, may be a corrupt worm-eaten pestilent thing in the dirt! What, then, if any man should say to you, Where is thy God? What if it should be said to you, as was said to an ancient people, "Thy calf hath cast thee off, oh Samaria." Samaria trusted to her calf that it would stand her in good stead at all times and in all places. But there came upon her a point of history when the calf turned away and there arose a mocking shout, "Thy calf hath cast thee off, oh Samaria." Samaria being calfless was godless. You will understand my urgency therefore in respeating the starting point. There are times in life when men have to look about for their gods. There are some gods that lure their worshippers on and on until, having got to the brink of the precipice, they vanish and no prayer can recover their presence.

But now we have to face the mystery of the revelation of the true God in times of human need. This part of the subject is not free from

difficulty. Many a man has felt the most intense pain on observing what he supposed was God's absence from the scene of human affairs. God has been looked for and looked for apparently in vain. When His voice might have hushed the storm not a sound was heard. When His coming would have been more welcome than morning light or summer beauty, He did not appear to eyes that wearily waited for him. There has gone up a cry from hearts sad with intolerable grief, "Why standest thou afar off, oh God?" This difficulty must be grappled with if we would be honest to all sides of our great subject. In reply to this difficulty I suggest three things.

As a mere matter of fact, attested by a thousand histories known in our own experience, God has appeared in vindication of his name and honour. The whole Bible shows this to be a truth. I will not quote you history upon history to prove it. These things are known to your own recollection. Once upon a time a grand old Methodist preacher, called John Nelson—a man whose life ought to be read often on Saturday night by preachers who have got their skeletons ready, in order that they might be fired to do their work—was obliged to become a soldier, and as he was arrayed, and was being mocked by many, a woman came to him and said, "Nelson, where is now thy God? Thou didst say at Shent's door that thou hadst no more fear of all his promises failing than thou hadst of falling through the centre of the earth. Where is now thy God?" You know how mocking a bad woman can be, what sharpness there is in her voice. Nelson, in whom the word of God dwelt richly, said, "You will find the answer in the seventh chapter of Micah, the eighth and tenth verses." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? Mine eyes shall beheld her; now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets." Everything is in the Bible! There is an answer to everything in God's Book, only sometimes we do not know our lesson well enough to refer to the place. But these old Methodist preachers, who had nothing but the Bible, and perhaps a borrowed Concordance, were mighty in God's word, and oftentimes their sword, the sword of the Holy Ghost, cleft the opposition by which they were annoyed. I have some reason to believe that the answer given by John Nelson was literally fulfilled in the experience of the woman who taunted him with the question which I have now quoted. Whether or not, there are instances from the beginning of history down to our own times which show that God has interposed in human affairs to regulate, control, dispose, and in all things to glorify his own name.

Then, as a first principle in sound theology, it must be admitted that God himself is the only true judge as to the best manner and time of interposition. By so much as he is God this point at least must be conceded. Let us be fair to God, as we would be fair to man. By so much as he is God—infinite, almighty, all-wise—he must know better than we when to come and how to come. Once I spent three nights in disputing publicly with a well-known disbeliever in christian truth, and ventured to lay down the doctrine which I have now vindicated, and

against me was quoted the case of Stephen. Stephen was taken by the mob, dragged out and stoned. "Where was his God then?" was the mocking enquiry of my opponent. It was not at first sight an easy thing to answer there and then. A man must not go away and think about a question of that kind for a month, and then come with a reply: he must answer then. Promptness is success; immediateness in such a case as that is conquest. The case was apparently dead against the christian theory. Here is a man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, overwhelmed by numbers, dragged away, stoned to death, mocked in his last agonies. Where was his God? My reply was, "Did God then do nothing for Stephen? Was the first christian martyr quite abandoned? Was there no seal or token of divine presence and care given to that suffering man? I go to Stephen himself for an answer; and when he, outraged and dishonoured, said with his dying breath, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,'—to have wrought in the human soul, under circumstances so tragic and terrible, a desire like that, was to do more for Stephen then if he had been lifted up by myriads of angels out of the hands of his murderers and set in the sun!" Don't let us forget God's *spiritual* gifts to us,—gifts of nature, of soul, qualities of heart, sublime views of truth, nobleness of tone, under circumstances that are trying and exasperating. Did he do nothing for Stephen? I will go to Stephen himself for the reply. Though the stones were falling upon him and he was in the last agonies, he said in a whisper, the sound of which shall survive the voices of all thunders and floods, "I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." It is only in crises, in extremities such as these, that the highest reach of faith is realised, and that faith itself becomes victory.

Then the very absence of God, being dictated by wisdom, and controled by love, must be intended to have a happy effect upon human faith. Sometimes we say, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." There is a deep truth in that common sentiment. Once God said to people mourning his absence, "For a small moment,"—such as no chronometer ever measured the duration of. "For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercies—billow upon billow of mercies—will I gather thee, restore thee, comfort thee, and assure thee." When God is absent, what if his absence be intended to excite enquiry in our hearts? When God is absent, what if his absence be intended to develop the trust of our nature? It is in having to grope for God we learn lessons of our own blindness, and weakness, and spiritual incapacity. We know not what God may be working out for us in the very act of withdrawing himself for a small moment, and for a space immeasurably minute.

Let me leave by speaking one gentle word which will help all men, for all men have dark days, and sadnesses, and troubles. There is not a man here—and I see a good many radiant faces—who has not in his heart, who has not had in his heart or who will not have in his heart some serpent, viper, shadow, pain, trouble, unrest. It is my brother, the common lot, and it has meaning in it. One day thou wilt be able to piece all these things together and see them shaping themselves into a

merciful purpose. Let me speak to thee one gentle word. Take out your memorandum-books if you please, because I intend to make an engagement for you. But stay! you need not take out your diary, because I know you have no engagement for the day which I am going to mention. You need not look, because I know there is a vacant line, and you can fill up that line now. How do I know that there is a vacancy in that part of your diary? Because all history tells me that it is so. It is impossible for me to be mistaken in this matter. So you need not look into your memorandum-book, because there is a vacant place there which I now want to fill up. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." Now you have no engagement for the day of trouble! You have not. Your friends don't want to see you in the day of trouble. They don't want to open the door to a man who has a burden upon his back. They say, "Call upon us in the summer time, call upon us when thou art garlanded with blossoms; call upon us when thy hands are laden with fruit; come when fortune is propitious, when the winds are southerly, when there is blue sky overhead." But you have no engagement for the day of trouble. God therefore comes and asks that that day may be his. That very conception ought to convert this congregation instantly. If it were but a dream it ought to secure immortality for the writer. It is one of those short sentences which, were it but a scintillation of human fancy, ought to cause the author to have pedestals and columns to his memory, long as the sun shall shine.

We claim it to be a divine revelation, a fatherly truth, a message out of God's great heart. "Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you." Observe the reasoning. He does not say, "Casting all your care upon him for he is powerful; casting all your care upon him for he is wise; casting all your care upon him for he is infinite." These things never would have touched me; I could have escaped all that kind of reasoning and laughed at it. But casting all your care upon him for he *careth* for you! Sympathy is his challenge. He careth for you! That is the ground of meeting. Sympathy is power; sympathy is omnipotence; sympathy is omniscience; sympathy is infinitude of mercy and blessing and sufficiency, when found in God. This is His gentle word: "Cast all your care upon me, for I *care* for you!"

The City Temple.

THE INSTITUTE OF HOMILETICS.

IT is my growing conviction that there is no work equal, in range, pathos, and grandeur, to the work of preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. I have recently taken the trouble of going once more to scenes made famous by the eloquence of many orators, and my impression has been deepened that the Pulpit, if faithful to its vocation and opportunities, has nothing to fear from any rivalry. The Senator and Lawyer have undoubtedly some advantages in the immediate excitement occasioned by their subjects; but for substance, solemnity, and far-reaching influence and result, their work is the merest trifling when compared with the ministry of Jesus Christ's truth. Under this impression I have anxiously considered whether I could make any practical contribution to the cause of the Christian Pulpit, and the answer has happily been dictated by events. It has been my honour to receive invitations to visit several Colleges and converse with the Students respecting their prospective work as preachers and pastors. Inability to accept such invitations has occasioned me considerable uneasiness. It occurred to me, however, that if Students could arrange to come occasionally to some central place, some good might come of frank intercourse upon ministerial and pastoral preparation and service. Acting upon this suggestion, Students of various denominational Colleges were invited to attend at the Poultry Chapel, on Thursday morning, May 25th, 1871, to make arrangements for periodical conversation. There were present Students from New College, Hackney, Regent's Park, and the Presbyterian Col-

lege, Guilford Street: there were present also members of the Church of England and the Primitive Methodist Connexion. It was resolved to meet at the Poultry on the Monday after the first Sunday of each month, at two o'clock in the afternoon. The first meeting will be held on Monday, June 5th. One member of the Institute will read the Scriptures and another will offer prayer; three homiletic outlines will then be presented for criticism by Students from St. John's Wood, Regent's Park, and Guilford Street (Presbyterian). The criticism will apply to the structure and doctrine of the discourse, the style of the composition, and the manner of the speaker. The Students entered into the proposal with characteristic spirit, and so far gave indication of a satisfactory future. If any of our readers wish to join the Institute, they must communicate with me prior to the first meeting. The Institute is entirely unsectarian. Its advantages are offered to members of all denominations without any charge. There are no fees to pay and no books to buy.

As the work has, virtually, been undertaken at the request of Students themselves, perhaps they are the fittest parties to answer any objections which may be urged against the plan. One thing may be said in its favour: *it will afford students of various Colleges an opportunity of exchanging ideas upon their work.* Students from Regent's Park will not be the worse for being criticised by Students from St. John's Wood, and Students from St. John's Wood will not be the worse for being criticised by brethren from Regent's Park. The Hackney Student and the Cheshunt Student will each be the better for a friendly tilt. Viewed in this light, it is hoped that the plan inaugurated on the 25th inst. will commend itself to the judgment and confidence of all who take an interest in the Christian ministry of the future. On one point it is most important to be explicit: *if the plan should in any way operate to the injury of regular College work, or to the discomfort of any Professor, it shall be instantly modified or abandoned.*

The course of exercises will include:

(1.) Criticism upon homiletic outlines submitted by Students.
(2.) Analysis of different methods of preaching.
(3.) Practice in Emphasis, and general Elocution.
(4.) Consideration of the best *physical* preparation for preaching.
And (5.) Discussion of questions relating to Pastoral Theology.

THE CHURCH IN PARLIAMENT.

BY the special favour of the Prime Minister I was permitted to occupy a seat in the House of Commons on Tuesday evening, May 9th, 1871. I was glad of the opportunity on several grounds. First of all, a resolution upon Disestablishment was to be moved, and of course there was an almost certainty that some of our principal parliamentary speakers would figure on the occasion. The scene was certainly full of interest. Facing each other sat hundreds of Conservatives and Liberals, all excited by the question of the hour, and all prepared for the tug of war. Sitting quietly in my corner under the Speaker's gallery, trying to find out which were Conservatives and which Liberals, I had great difficulty in doing so. In general appearance they were very like each other. They looked about equal in station and intelligence. Surely, "they were all honourable men,"—*all*. From their appearance no one could tell which were Conservatives and which Liberals. All men are Conservatives when they are asleep, and probably it is the same when they are silent. Presently, said I, some one will speak, and his speech will to a large extent classify the whole House. So it was. Mr. MIALL responded to his name, and then I saw pretty clearly who was who. One thing surprised me, viz., the considerable sprinkling of *young men* on the Conservative side. It is generally understood that all Conservatives are more than fifty years of age, and that they have some difficulty in moving themselves from one place to another. This impression was entirely removed from my mind on the 9th of May. Many of the Conservatives are young, strong men, active in limb, and clear in voice, and gifted with rare power in the matter of saying "No, No," to any doctrine which they disbelieve. But Mr. MIALL is speaking. I do not know Mr. MIALL except as a public man. I never spoke to him. What I say, therefore, is said without prejudice either favourable or unfavourable on merely personal grounds. Mr. MIALL's speech was, in my opinion, excellent in spirit, chaste in expression, but here and there misdirected in argument. Had the question been "shall we *now* establish any denominational form of religion in England?" many of his pleas would have had decisive weight; but he did not sufficiently grapple with the fact that all history brings with it a peculiar set of difficulties, and that in some cases, as in the Established Church, those difficulties may assume all the impressiveness and authority of a moral argument. So far as Mr. MIALL's argument was abstract, it was in nearly every respect (except in its illustrations) invincible. The comparison, for example, between an Establishment of Science and an Establishment of Religion was, in my judgment, unworthy of the general substance of the speech. Science claims no authoritative Revelation. Science is at best but an Inquiry; Religion claims, at least, to be a Law. Mr. MIALL may be perfectly right in contending that Religion should not be established by Act of Parliament, but we fail to see that his reasoning is as sound as his conclusion.

Moreover, the illustration was beside the mark, because the question was not shall we *establish* a church? but, shall we *dis*establish one? And it was not shown by his illustration, that it must be right to destroy one thing because it would be manifestly unwise to create another. The debate on the 9th of May, showed clearly to my mind that in the House of Commons the question of disestablishment must not be argued on religious or metaphysical grounds.

Three things must be proved—(1) that the nation has *outgrown* established churches; (2) that established churches have *failed to do the work* to which they are specially devoted; and (3) that they can be disestablished *without endangering any interest which affects the security and progress of the nation.* Prove these three things, and there will be no occasion to go into collateral matters,—prove anything else, and the *political* citadel will be left untouched.

Sir ROUNDELL PALMER'S speech was a charming piece of practical blundering and logical fallacy. Had I known nothing about the question but what I heard from Sir ROUNDELL, I should have concluded (1) that somebody proposed to *destroy* a great christian institution; (2) that it was proposed to silence every preacher in the Episcopal Church, to exile every clergyman from the country, and to paralyse a vast system of beneficent activity; and (3) that the religous life of England was being threatened by some murderous hand. It may be said that this would be the effect of disestablishment, but Sir ROUNDELL declared, that if the church were disestablished she would put forth greater efforts than ever. So she would. She is more than a political engine. She is a great christian institution, and as such she would survive all changes of her merely political condition. Sir ROUNDELL drew a flattering picture of a country parson: Well? who wants to injure a hair of his head? Mr. MIALL did not propose to *kill* the clergy, but to *liberate* them. Sir ROUNDELL said that the Church has done a great deal of good: Well? who denies it? Mr. MIALL would rejoice to see the Church doing good on a still larger scale. Sir ROUNDELL said that the Church had stimulated dissenters to do much good: true: and is it not also true that dissenters have stimulated the Church to attempt great christian enterprises? Sir ROUNDELL never grappled with the real question. His speech was neither an argument nor an answer, it was merely a piece of fancy-work very nicely done. There was, however, something pitiful in the fact that so able and so sincere a man failed so utterly to see the merits of the greatest question in politics.

Mr. DISRAELI showed how possible it is to talk well without reasoning well, and what fine exercise it is to aim at nothing and hit it. Without laying down any great principle, or suggesting a solitary argument in defence of the political supremacy of the Established Church, he contrived to entertain and enliven the House. He made, however one important admission, viz., that if logic governed the Commons it was very probable that the motion would be regarded as a necessary supplement to the Act affecting the Church in Ireland. There he was unquestionably right. In the long run logic gets its way. Rhetoric is a pretty toy, but logic is the staff of life. Mr. DISRAELI is not a logician, yet even he can understand that every addition made to the strength of

nonconformity hastens the liberation of Christ's Church from State patronage and control.

Mr. GLADSTONE was not himself. There was something in his mouth which impaired his emphasis. His vision, too, was out of order; he looked at the question through a cloud, and mistook shadows for mountains. On this subject his moral instincts will eventually get the better of his political prejudices, and he will gird himself to the crowning work of his marvellous and most beneficent career. Mr. GLADSTONE is pre-eminently the man to deal with the political bearings of all church questions. His heart is sound through and through, and his courage is equal to his most urgent impulses. He said nearly everything worth saying on the subject in one sentence,—before parliament can be persuaded the country must be converted. Every chapel built helps the end, so does every member added to the churches of the nonconformists, so does every penny given by the heart of grateful love. Nonconformists have their work clearly marked out,—it is a pre-eminently a *religious* work. It must be admittted, however, that the debate in parliament did great good. It gave importance to the political aspects of the question. It tested the sincerity of many professed nonconformists. It gave unwilling listeners an opportunity of hearing some unpleasant but most impressive and telling truths;—and it gave politicians to understand that when they renew their appeals to the electors they will, in many instances, have to prepare an answer upon the question of Church establishments.

Churchmen and Nonconformists are now rapidly understanding each other better than they have ever done. They mingle with each other in social circles; they read each other's literature; they enquire about each other's work; this must tend to the development and application of a noble and uncompromising charity. I am well aware that these lines will go into the study of many a clergyman of the Established Church, and I am confident that they will be understood as the expression of a sincere desire for the continued strengthening and success of all that is truly christian and useful within the boundaries of the Established Church. Since coming to London I have had much reason to speak highly of clergymen. They have most cordially sustained me in my public work, and in many ways have shown a spirit which proves their preparedness to sympathise with movements which are conducted beyond the orbit of the Establishment. In these incidental ways men approach each other, and become disarmed of unreasonable and mischievous prejudices. They will yet get much nearer, and one day they will emulate each other in saying—"One is our Master and all we are brethren."

Expository Readings in the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER I.

1. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

The former treatise is the Gospel by Luke. To that comprehensive record the same writer now adds an account of the Acts of the Apostles. It is remarkable that such writings should have been addressed to one individual; this circumstance is suggestive of comparative privacy. In many respects those two records are the most important writings in the world, and yet they are inscribed to one man as if they were expressions of private friendship. The kingdom of heaven cannot be long in secret keeping. When once it takes possession of any man that man becomes its propagator. There is much that is instructive in this communication of truth to the individual mind, rather than to the mind of the community as a whole. God made the individual Adam; God called the individual Abraham; God elected the individual Mary; God anointed the individual Christ,—the individual was enough; one vital heart gives life to the whole world. Theophilus was the original receiver of these writings, but to-day they are the property of all men.

Of all that Jesus began: Jesus Christ's earthly ministry was only a beginning; its continuation is conducted in the invisible world. We see but a fragment; our judgement, therefore, is limited, but our hopes are unbounded. A ministry begun on earth and carried on in heaven, can contemplate nothing less than the highest interests of men.

Both to do and to teach: Jesus Christ's life was divided between Action and Doctrine; he did what he taught, he taught what he did. The miracle was an illustrated doctrine; the doctrine was an explained miracle.

The first verse shows that we have in Luke's gospel and in Luke's report of the apostolic church a human account of divine transactions.

2. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.

Taken up: An exaltation as if by another, not an ascension as if by his own motion. Both senses are right. Jesus Christ ascended, and was "received up into heaven." Various expressions are used in giving the account,—"received up into glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16), "received up into heaven" (Mark, xvi. 19), "carried up into heaven" (Luke, xxiv. 51). The exaltation or ascension of Jesus Christ was not merely from one point of space to another, but from a lower to a higher ministry. He has ascended up far above all principalities and powers,—all power is given unto him in heaven!

Through the Holy Ghost Jesus Christ gave commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen. The personal ministry was to be super-

seded by the spiritual,—the Man Christ Jesus by the Holy Ghost. What is the meaning of the expression, "after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments"? Did Jesus Christ give the commands by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, or did the Holy Ghost give the commands through Jesus Christ? "The simplest and most natural meaning of the words is: Jesus gave, through the Holy Ghost, by means of the Holy Ghost, commandments:—namely, Jesus anointed with the Holy Ghost, has in the power of the Holy Ghost given commandments to his apostles to be his witnesses; so that this command was likewise a command of the Spirit" (*Lechler and Gerok*).

Commandments: Not mere hints, or suggestions; not vague directions or ambiguous messages; but commandments. All truth is dogmatic. The christian testimony rests upon an authoritative declaration; there has been a formal expression of the Lord's will, and upon that expression all christian service must stand. The commandments were given to the Apostles; it would follow, then, that apostolic doctrine is Christ's own doctrine, and that the Epistles are the continuation and complement of the Gospels.

3. To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the christian system. "If Christ be not risen from the dead then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." Luke says that the resurrection was shown by "many infallible proofs," and that the showing of those proofs extended over forty days. The evidence is not a transitory sight, or a probable appearance, or an inferential conviction; no event could possibly be more clearly demonstrated and established; the whole train of proofs is clear and convincing.

Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: He had but one theme, the greatest which could occupy the mind of man. It is important to note that Jesus Christ held posthumous councils with his disciples of which no minute account is given in the Gospels. We must turn to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to learn the true scope and quality of Jesus Christ's doctrine.

4. And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Commanded them: There is one lawgiver, one Head of the Church, one source of authority.

That they should not depart from Jerusalem: An apparently insignicant circumstance. Why limit the residence to Jerusalem? Could not the Holy Ghost have been given in any other place? Such arrangements are all in harmony with the minuteness of divine order. Jerusalem was to see strange sights,—the men who had fled from physical terror were to stand in that very city as the foremost witnesses of christian truth! The period of shameful weakness was to be succeeded by such a display of moral constancy as the world had never seen.

Truly, something more than mere death was needed to establish the Christian faith. The Cross was not enough,—men fled from it as from a great terror. What, then, was needed? *Resurrection!* Men cannot be saved by a dead Christ; they must be saved by a Christ who has risen from the dead.

Wait for the promise of the Father: Here we have the whole Godhead explicitly set forth in connection with redemption,—the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, are all spoken of as having each a distinct work in the foundation of the christian church. This is the more remarkable as the statement is not so much formal as incidental, as if it were a reference to an original and essential relation of cause and effect. From the very beginning the church has been a divine conception, and now that it is established it is a divine fact. An error at this point will vitiate our whole idea of the church; it will degenerate into a human confederacy settled upon a basis of earthly legislation. Take Christ's own representation: there were apostles, Christ chose them,—the Apostles received commandments, it was by the Holy Ghost,—the Apostles were assembled together, it was to receive a command from Jesus Christ,—the Apostles were to wait in Jerusalem, it was for the promise of the Father. Throughout the whole arrangement the divine element was primal and predominant, thus giving a divine vitality and a heavenly lustre to that despised form of society the christian church.

5. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

The dispensations have ever had a tendency towards the *spiritual.* From the beginning of biblical history to its close there is a constant movement from the merely external. Where the external has been specially demonstrative and magnificent, it has been to symbolise the grandeur of spiritual truth. Externalism has never been set forth as permanent. Solomon's temple was stupendous, but John saw no temple in heaven; the sun attracts the delighted vision of all men, but in the heavenly city there is no need of the sun; John's baptism was outward, Jesus Christ's promised baptism was a baptism of the soul. So, throughout, the ages have been advancing towards the Holy Ghost. The same principle has been operating even in civilisation. The power of the arm has diminished as the power of mind has increased; in machinery the complex and the cumbrous are giving way to the simple and self-acting; in writing, the scribe has succeeded in keeping pace with the rapidity of eloquence; and in communication between continent and continent the telegraph is the nearest approach to spirituality,—materialism has been reduced to a minimum, to a metal thread which has bound the nations and made them sharers of a common intelligence. In all this we find a movement from the material towards the spiritual; and it partakes of the nature of that all-inclusive movement, the movement toward the Holy Ghost.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 1, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-THIRD NOONDAY SERVICE.)

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.

"I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you."—John, xiii., 15.

THE incident recorded in this chapter is made the more beautiful by certain features of surpassing grandeur which are found in immediate connection with it. There seems, indeed, at first an inequality between the majesty of the mountain and the value of the frail flower which blooms on its sunny height. We are startled by the difference between the introduction and the progress of the narrative. It is as if God had called attention by great thunderings, and when he had excited the expectation of the universe, introduced, not a burning seraph—who might have maintained the high tone of the

introduction—but a quiet little child, a miniature of his own gentleness and purity. This is the introduction, hear it, and say whether the representation now given be correct. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God—" At this point wonder is excited. We enquire what will he do *now*, at this critical and trying juncture of his life. Jesus knows the fulness of the mystery set forth in his incarnation; he sees the beginning in the light of the end; he knows *all;* he sees God behind him sending him into the world,—sees God before him welcoming him after the completion of his earthly ministry. What will he do *now?* Jesus has come within sight of the end; all the fragments of his life are gathering themselves together and taking wondrous shape, as he beholds them coming into union and forming themselves into their hidden meanings,—what will he do *now?* We wait almost breathlessly for the next sentence. Let us read it as our imagination might dictate it. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God, unfolded secret wings and went up into the light; unveiled splendours which had been concealed under the guise of his flesh; called angels—host upon host, a dazzling throng—to bring the crown he had left in heaven. This is our notion of greatness, of pomp, of circumstance. But, just as when the disciples asked who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus set a little child in the midst of them,—so when we ask, What will he do when the great mystery is revealing itself to him? he does not any one of the supposed wonderful things which he might have done, but, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, *He began to wash the disciples' feet!* Who but himself could have afforded such an apparent anticlimax? Where is there any creation of your romance that can play so with the public? Who can afford in one moment to affect sublimity and grandeur and majesty, and in the next ask to wash your feet? It seems as if Jesus Christ might have washed the disciples' feet in the midst of his most obvious humiliation. He need not have reserved that display of his humility for the supreme moment of consciousness, when God's eternity was round about him, beating in waves of immortal blessedness upon the earthliest and poorest aspects of his mission. Yet it was *then*, when the whole thing, in all the brightness of its glory, showed itself to his inmost heart, that he stooped to wash the feet of the men who had followed him!

I ask you to consider this attentively. We ourselves, creatures redeemed and sanctified, sometimes have moments of special spiritual vividness. Now and then we see our grandeur as sons of God. In such moments we get views of ourselves as seen in Christ Jesus which bless us with divine elevation and peace. Now, what is the social expression which we give to such sublime consciousness? How is that consciousness made to tell upon the people who are round about us? The consciousness will surely perish, leaving no heart-blessing behind it, unless under its inspiration we do deeds of nobleness, compassion, charity, which show how even the commonest and poorest side of life may be lifted up and made beautiful. This was how Jesus Christ turned to practical account his highest consciousness of Sonship: knowing that

the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God, *He began to wash the disciples' feet!* Sublime consciousness was thus turned into condescending service; high spiritual dominion and joy found expression in a deed of humility without which even the greatest revelation of majesty, the revelation of the Son of God, would have been incomplete. The deed was simultaneous with the consciousness. Jesus did not wait until the keenness of his joy had abated a little. In the very fulness and glory of his power he laid aside his garments, took a towel, girded himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet. Don't let that picture pass away from your minds as if it were nothing. He laid aside his garments, took a towel, girded himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet. If that picture will not melt men and make them solemn, it can do them no good. It was in the highest moment of his consciousness that he did this. We are to do even little things when we are at the highest stretch of our strength. All the work of life should be done under inspiration. Not only the greatest things; not only the fine carving, but the mortar-mixing; not only the fighting of splendid battles, but the taking home of straying lambs and the gathering up of fallen fragments. So, if we catch aright the meaning of Christ, the elevation of our consciousness is to express itself in the beauty of social charity and service. It is not to consume itself in beatific quietism and sentimental contemplation: it is to prove itself divine by embodiment in visible and useful labour. The apostle says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Pause a moment, then, and let us try to find out the reason. Because we feel very comfortable in our hearts, because we like to sit very closely to the fire and read a favourite author, because we have occasional gushings of very tender feeling, is that how we know we have passed from death unto life? The apostle says, No. His argument is this:—We *know*—the same word that I have in the text, Jesus *knowing*—that we have passed from death unto life *because we love the brethren*. Alas, sirs! there is this danger about our religious life to-day: We think, when we get hold of a favourite book, and repeat certain familiar hymns, and look upon ourselves, in relation to the social blessings with which God has gifted us, that we are doing everything that is needful to show our relationship, to prove our redemption by Christ. The Saviour, knowing the full mystery of God's purpose concerning his ministry in this world, seeing his hands filled with the gifts of God, opened those hands that he might wash the feet of the disciples. There is a contemplation of which I am afraid. There is a species of spiritual luxury which amounts to the most terrible temptation and snare. Do you say there are times when you feel as if you could wash the feet of the poorest disciple of Christ? Then why don't you do it? You wear away your feeling, and incapacitate yourself for its recurrence in all its finest sensibility, by allowing it to reach the highest point without turning it into the most condescending service.

In the course of his attention to the disciples, Jesus came to Simon Peter. We are entitled, are we not, from the structure of the sentence to infer that Simon Peter was not taken first? I do not stop to debate the question. The point is of little importance except as bearing upon

those who draw mischievous lessons from the supposed supremacy of Peter. The principal point is found in the conversation which passed between the wondering disciple and his condescending Lord. When Jesus Christ came to Peter, that disciple spoke to him. "Dost thou wash my feet?" "Yes." "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter reasoned from a much lower consciousness than Christ's. Peter saw nothing beyond the mere fact of washing the disciples' feet. To him it was only a fact; it was not an emblem. It lost its meaning because he did not look at it in a spiritual light. It was only something done; it was not a parable full of secret meaning, palpitating with divine mystery. How true it is that to the wise man, whose eyes are in his head and whose heart has any sympathy with God, "things are not what they seem." Now, in Jesus Christ's answer to Peter, we find the other half of the gracious truth on which we have been insisting. It has been said that consciousness is to express itself in service. We now see that, as consciousness sometimes precedes service and dictates it, so occasionally facts prepare the way for consciousness. There is a kind of reciprocal action. Some men can work from consciousness best; can work from the intuitive, the subjective, the internal, the spiritual. Other men can only work from the point of information, from the point of mere fact; they must see something, handle something, and work their way from the visible to the unseen. It was so in the case of Peter: hence Jesus Christ said, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." We are not always to work from the point of knowledge, observe. We are not always to work from the point of understanding. There are occasions in life when our highest powers of reasoning are to be set aside, and we are to become little children, creatures of yesterday, receivers only. Those who are blind are invited to put their little hands into the great hand of God. It is as if Christ had said to Peter: "Let this thing be done. Do what I wish. Do the will; and afterwards thou shalt know the doctrine,—that external thing which occasions nothing but wonder now, which seems a mere waste of power on my part, shall in due time be seen to have deep meaning, shall become a precious emblem and an inspiring example."

Illustrations of this are not wanting in daily life. You may find one in the ordinance of infant baptism. To each infant it may be said, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." This baptism is a fact of which the spiritual meaning and spiritual blessedness will come by and by. Let it stand at the very beginning of thy life, and God will tell thee all the intent of it when thou shalt be able to hear him in thy heart. Ordinances are not to wait for reason. There are persons who affect to find amusement in observing the ordinance of infant baptism. They talk about the crying little children, and they quite shake themselves with a species of inexplicable fun as they look upon halt-a-dozen poor trembling little things brought up to a basin of water. They say, "What do they know about it and what can they understand about it?" as if we understood anything,—forgetful that the old man is a young being! When shall we give over looking at our ages according to the returns of registrars and the calculations of actuaries? The oldest man amongst us is old and venerable as a man within the limits of this

earthly discipline and pilgrimage; but manhood is only a fraction of being, and ten thousand ages are nothing when set against the eternity of God. We know nothing. We understand in its fulness and perfectness nothing. What if we should be pushed aside, and Jesus should take up one of those sweet little infants, and say, This is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven! It would be very humiliating to us,—because we know and we understand, and we snatch a moment's vulgar sniffling from seeing little children baptised in God's house.

Sometimes things are to be done, and the explanation is to come after the fact. Our first question must always be, Is this the will of God? if so, we shall find the explanation of the mystery in God's way and God's time. I planted a little seed, and, as I was hiding it away in the dark ground, it asked me why I did not let it lie in the sunshine, where it could see the bright blue day and hear the singing birds. I answered, "What thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter." The sun came and the dew and the living air, and for awhile they tarried at the prison-door of the seed. By and by the prisoner came forth, beautiful in form and exquisite in colour; day by day it grew in strength and increased in loveliness; and in the fulness of the summer time it knew, without asking me, why I had hidden it in the earth. It is even so with children whose minds and memories are stored with the truths of God's Word. At first they know but the letter. The knowledge of the letter may come through strife and pain. For long years it may lie dead in the heart; but in some season of special sorrow, in the day of trouble and sore distress, when heart and flesh do fail, it may arise and bring deliverance, and lead away the soul into the very presence of God. Believe, then, in the mysteries of life; believe in facts, ordinances, means. The intent and purpose of each do not lie upon the surface. Wheresoever God may bid us go let us hasten to the place, for there we shall find his blessing.

I have said that the explanation of a fact may come by and by. In the case before us the explanation came immediately after the event. After he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Suppose that Jesus Christ had laid down the abstract doctrine,—Christians, ye ought to wash one another's feet. What would have been the result? Who would have believed him? We should have found in that an instance of mistranslation; there would have been great hunting up of grammars and lexicons upon that point, because it stands to reason, that the thing is utterly absurd. There is a missing letter; there is a wrong punctuation; there is a great difference of opinion between critics, we should have said, as to the meaning of this. But what does Jesus Christ do? Instead of merely laying down the doctrine, he gave the *example*. This shows how teaching may start from either of two points,—from philosophy or from life. It may be based upon a course of reasoning; it may express itself in example, in service, in deed. Some teaching must, from the necessity of the case, be purely intellectual; it does not admit of incarnation. Other teach-

ing may at once be practical; it may rise out of the life, and prove by positive demonstration the practicability and beneficence of its philosophy. Christ's method did not admit of debate. It was not a theory, it was a fact. There it was,—a stoop that could never be forgotten, an argument which no ingenuity could ever impair. It was practicable; the Lord and Master had *done* it. It was *worth* doing; or he who never trifled with life would not have set the example. This shows in a wonderful manner the vocation of men to whom God has assigned positions of lordship and mastery in life. What is our business in proportion as God has set us in eminent places, given us great talent or great wealth, or great position of any kind? Our duty is to set examples of lowliness and charity,—the lowliness which comes out of righteousness, the charity which stands upon law. We require all the stimulus of illustrious *precedent* in order to do some things which are unwelcome in life. We have not courage to do some things solely on their own merits. Even if we could see them to be duties we could never bring ourselves to discharge them. We want somebody else to do it first. We want to hide ourselves under a great name. Christ provides for this peculiarity of our nature. He allows us to use his name and example. "You may say that I did it. If ever you are caught in the humiliating act of washing your brother's feet, and there should come into your cheek a tingling of shame, you may say that I did it." You will in life—such are the combinations of society—occasionally want *precedent*. You cannot always work upon the abstract and the right. Sometimes you will want the defence of a name; you will occasionally want to be able to point to somebody behind you and say, "He did it first." "Now take my name, I have given you an example." So we get out of a splendid *precedent* what we never could have got out of an abstract *command*. We all know well what this is in life. The young man who wants to try some new plan of doing his work, trembles a little before doing so, and then he says, "I will do it." And when he has been brought to book about it, it has been an encouragement to him, when he could point to some older man and say, "He does it." We thus live in one another, and the Past becomes the inspiration of the Present; and precedents and examples are vitalised into the living influential forces of to-day. This is how our greatest work has been done.

Sometimes I have had this question put to me by leaders of choirs, by preachers of the word, by leaders of various kinds: Are we to go down to the people, or are the people to come up to us? And there is really a great deal of plausibility in that enquiry. It is one of those questions that take people off their guard; it sounds uncommonly well. Am I, says the preacher, to go down to the people who cannot understand these long words and strange sentences, or are they to come up to me? Do you ask that question seriously? I have an answer. For God's sake go down to them. Come up to you! Who are you? Eh? Come up to *you*! That is a misreading is it not? You did not mean up to *you*. When the singing man who likes classical music says, Am I to go down to the congregation, or is the congregation to come up to

me? I say, My dear sir, for God's sake go down to the congregation. Here is a mother who looks over the side of the cradle upon the little child and says, "Am I to come down to you or are you to come up to me?" Here is a schoolmaster who looks at a little fellow about two-feet-and-a-half high, who does not know one letter from another, and says, "Am I to come down to you, or are you to come up to me, you little wretch?" I say, For God's sake, for Christ's sake, for the sake of the Cross, go down! "Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of the servant." "He that abaseth himself shall be exalted." "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."

Looking at the incident as affording lessons respecting a higher washing than the washing of water, we should see:—First: That all men require to be cleansed. Secondly: That Christ alone can purify impure men. "If I wash not Thy feet, thou hast no part with me." Thirdly: That the purification of man is wrought out with man's consent. Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Fourthly: That the blessings which are given by Jesus Christ are to be given to other people, that we may be as Christ was in the world. These I leave without amplification.

The last word spoken by Jesus Christ in the case before us is most practical: "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them." Even such an exhortation, "Ye ought to wash one another's feet," supported by such an example as "I have washed yours," might come to nothing. Pride might still rule the life. The doing might be unequal to the knowing. In the communication of divine truth and the display of divine examples the will of Christ is supreme. But men may despise all knowledge and treat all examples with contempt. *Happy* are ye if ye do them. Yes, and only then. There is no other happiness vital, gennuine, enduring. To do God's will, as revealed by Jesus Christ, is to enjoy the highest blessings which the human heart can realise. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If we were faithful to our knowledge we should indeed be the lights of the world.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou art our father and our mother; Thou art full of wisdom and power and love towards us. In all Thy daily ministry Thou comest to us with all the fulness of the Godhead; Thou placest all things at our disposal; Thou dost not treat us with contempt or with indifference, as if, being the creatures of a day, there was in us no germ or hope of immortality. Thou dost surround us with the infinite sufficiency of blessing and care; Thou dost watch us as if Thou hadst none in the universe besides us; there is not one of us that is not dear to Thy heart, and whom Thou wouldst not miss from Thy great family. We pray Thee to impress us with the sense of Thy continual presence. Teach us that Thy presence is not intended as a terror, but as the inspiration and hope of life. Surround us as by fire that no enemy may come near us. Grant unto our understanding the light of Thy wisdom that we may see truth as a continual revelation of Thyself, and cause our hearts to glow with divine love towards Thee as revealed in Jesus Christ. We bless Thee for the Cross, for the Sacrifice which it represents, for the love which it puts before us, for all its deep spiritual meaning. We thank Thee that in the Cross of Christ, the Lamb of God, we find the only gate of Heaven. Meet us to-day; comfort our hearts; solve all the difficult questions which perplex us in this life; work in us saintly patience, tender trust in our living, loving Father. Say to each of us the word of forgiveness, through the blood of Jesus Christ our Saviour, which shall give us liberty and inspire us with joy. Lord hear us! The Lord command His blessing to rest upon us, and we shall be filled with the peace of God! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 8, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-FOURTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL.

"Samuel . . . because I have asked him of the Lord."—1 Samuel, i., 20.

WE commence this morning a course of readings in the First Book of Samuel. On Sunday mornings we are reading the Acts of the Apostles. It is hoped that by this conjunction of studies we may be able to see more and more clearly the oneness of God's redemption and instruction of men. We shall see that, how diversified soever may be the outside of life, there is under all, and running through all, a beneficent and unchangeable purpose,—something deeper than man's thought, something higher than man's will; and thus, from the "goodly fellowship of the prophets" and the "glorious company of the apostles," we may be able to arrive at a

testimony which shall have upon our best life all the effect of an unanswerable argument and all the happy influence of an imperishable hope.

In the course of our readings of this ancient book, we shall be careful chiefly to trace, under all that is merely personal and local, principles that are moral and universal. We shall not concern ourselves much with merely verbal criticism. The question which we shall ask is this: What does this First Book of Samuel say to the men who are living now? And it may be that we shall find that the old book is really the new book, and the literature of to-day is but a reprint of truths and fancies ancient as the mind of man.

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, besought the Lord for a man child. This draws our attention to the scope of human prayer. Men cannot pray by rule. We do but mock men when we say, You must pray for this and not for that. Such an exhortation may do for man when his heart is not inflamed by the passion of godly desire; it may do for him in his coldest and most indifferent mental states. But when he is in his most vehement and determined moods, he cannot be fettered and limited by such exhortations. We need something more for our guidance than mere maxims. A maxim is too narrow for life. We need principles which can shrink into maxims and can expand into revelations as the exigencies of life may require. Sometimes we are cold and dull,—then a maxim will do: sometimes our strength rises to full flood,—then we need inspiration. You cannot conduct life in its highest phases and its intensest desires by any set of maxims. You can only control and elevate life by having principles which can shrink and expand,—adapt themselves when the man's moral temperature rises, when his strength rises, and suit themselves to all the varying phases and wants of his life. Tell Hannah that she ought not pray for what God has not seen fit to give her, and she scorns your formal piety and your tabulated counsels. Why? She is not in a mood to receive that kind of instruction; there is a hunger in her heart; through her own love she sees far into the love of God; and by the eagerness of her desire she goes far away, with bleeding weary feet, from beaten paths and accepted roads, that she may bind God by the very importunateness of her love. That is not the kind of woman into whose ear you can drop a little formal maxim with any effect. Your religion will be to her profanity, if you cannot address her in a higher tone,—meet her just where her soul is. She is borne away by the passion of her desire; there is one dominating force in her nature that transfigures everything, that defies difficulties, that surmounts obstacles, and that waits with trembling nervous patience till God come. What is love if it be not fiery? What is prayer if it be not the heart on a blaze? Prayer is not mere articulation; prayer is not mere words. Prayers are battles; prayers are the thunders which call for God when He seems to be far away!

Yonder is a wild goat, living on stony hills and desert places. He has wandered a long way from pasture, from food of any kind. In the madness of his hunger he sees on yonder edge, five hundred fathoms above the level, just one little tuft of grass—the only green

thing within a circuit of miles. It is a dangerous place, but then he is in a dangerous condition. He climbs to it,—the rock almost trembles under him. A moment more, and he lies yonder, hundreds of fathoms below, a bleeding mass. But impelled by hunger, he does what only the fierce courage of despair dare do. So it is with that keener hunger of human souls. We do sometimes pray for things that lie away from the line of ordinary devotion; we would not pray for them but for that over-mastering, irresistible, spiritual force that holds us in its mighty hand. If we were in coolness and sobriety of spirit and temper, we should be able to reason about it and to put things together and to draw inferences. Man is not fully man when he stands upon his feet; he touches the highest point of his manhood when he lifts the pinions of faith and hope, and goes off into the Unknown if haply he may find God! If you don't know what the hunger is you don't know what the prayer is. You can't feel as Hannah did without you have been in great straits, and when for the time you have been the willing victim of a glowing and grand desire. But is there not a limit? Yes, there is a limit, and it is sometimes well not to look at it in the light of a limit. It is true that we are shut up like the sea and watched like the whale, but that is no reason why we should shrivel into a pool or dwindle into a minnow. What is the limit of our prayer? This. Not my will but Thine be done! Is that a limit? Why, that is glorious liberty! Not my will but Thine,—not a little will but a great will,—not my thought but Thine,—not my love but Thine! Is it a limit? It is the lark rising from its field nest into the boundless liberty of the firmament! Truly we do not limit ourselves when we exchange the creature for the Creator. When we take up our little thought and say, "Lord, this is what we want,—but not our will but Thine be done," do we then throw away the greater for the less? It is a contrast, and only such a contrast as you find in the earth and heaven, in the blazing sun and the misty night.

Need I stop to say that there are some things which are not fit subjects for prayer at all? that there are some things which don't lie directly in the *devotional line?* For example, no man is at liberty to pray for wealth merely as such. "Lord, give me riches," would not be prayer; it would be profanity, it would be covetousness carried to the point of blasphemy! Wealth, as such, does not lie in the line of devotion, but far away from it, and can only be made incidental to it by certain moral considerations which the possessor of wealth may possibly know nothing at all about. Looked at in itself, Hannah's prayer was selfish and poor in its spiritual tone; but the woman did not know what she was praying for altogether. It is so with us in our highest devotions. When I lead your prayers I do no not know what I am asking for always. I know a little of the outside, and just see little edges of the great benefits I am imploring for you and for myself; but all the meaning of my words I do not know. God inspires the prayer, and then answers it; dictates the language, and then satisfies the petition. So that persons who are asking for a little ordinary daily blessing, may be asking for a gift the influence of which shall reach through ages, shall palpitate through eternity! Hannah says, Give me a man child! She

knows not the destinies that are involved in that prayer. And that prayer is not her own ! Her petition is but the echo of a higher voice. Herein is the mystery of prayer. There be cold, formal, rudimentary prayers ; there be labial prayers—prayers that come from the lips only ; and there be words which are revelations of Christ—subdued sighings of the soul, which God prompts and regulates, and which are sent for the trial of our patience and strength, that God may bring in upon our little petition a greater answer than our fancy ever dreamed, than our love dared expect !

We shall see in what an extraordinary mental and spiritual state Hannah was, if we read from the twelfth to the sixteenth verses :—

> " And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart ; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard : therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken ? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit : I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial : for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto."—12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

A beautiful speech of the heart ! Alas, men may be drunk, but not with wine ! There is a grief that has upon us all the effect of poison in the blood. There are anxieties that make us stagger to and fro like drunken men. There are paroxysms, hungers, and straits in life which take away from us our balance and equipoise, and which make us look almost insane in the eyes of men who are calm and cool and who are limited by the ordinary conditions of life. The ordinary cannot judge the extraordinary. A man when he has all his senses about him, and would therefore feel himself in his most judicious mood, cannot reach certain cases—they lie mile on mile beyond him. Only grief can understand grief ; only poetry can understand poetry ; only love can interpret love ; and only a woman in Hannah's mood can understand the trembling of Hannah's lips. We should be careful how we judge one another. Here is Eli, a priest of the living God, calling a woman drunken,—when she is insane in worship, when she is mad in the ecstacy of waiting upon God. There is a madness that is not lunacy ; there is an insanity that is the sublimest serenity. Priests do not always understand people. Official persons seldom do understand extra-officials. Eli had been accustomed to look upon persons, and to see them behave themselves under certain limits ; he had observed them displaying certain decorums when they came into the neighbourhood of the holy place. But here is something he never saw before ; and the priest of the living God, ordained and consecrated—who ought to have had a word of charity for the lowliest creature beneath his feet—instantly, with that little remnant of devil that is in the best men, says, " Thou art drunken ! " Oh, when will priests be charitable ! When shall we put the better and not the worse construction on extraordinary signs and tokens ! When shall we speak hopefully ! " Men would be better if we better deemed them."

There are three remarkable things in this case. First : Here is a religious household disquieted by one unhappy element. Hannah's life was lived under the harrow of Peninnah's reproach. The household

was a religious one. Elkanah went out of the city to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. Hannah was a praying woman. We have every reason to suppose that, speaking in general terms, the household was markedly religious; yet there was shot through it just one unhappy, disquieting, poisoning element. Let us get away from all that is merely local in the incident, and dwell upon the principle that one sinner destroyeth much good. The household is religious. The head of it is a worshipping man, reverent, strong in faith, punctilious in religious observances; those that are round about him have religious convictions and religious strength. Yet there is something in the household– just one little microscopic thing—that spoils the heaven. You cannot exhort people to get out of that. The element is little and insignificant in itself; but still it requires a vital remedy. The disquieting element is different in different houses. In almost every house there is some little spiteful wretch; in almost every family there is somebody that has the power of sneering at other people; in most households undoubtedly there are members who can drop just one scalding drop into a sore place and make it sorer. It can be done so that you cannot print it and publish it; it can be done so that you cannot report it; it can be done so that you can only *feel* it. These are the miseries that damn many lives. Who are we—happily situated, having little or nothing to interrupt our domestic joy—that we should in an off-handed manner exhort people to be more patient, and to be this and that and the other, when we ourselves could not be so if we were under the same circumstances? Understand, it is these little, insignificant things that destroy the happiness of a human home. Not great fights, not periodical revolutions in the domestic state; but nasty little words, untimely shruggings of the shoulder, and sneers that are no sooner on the lip than away. What is the cure for all that kind of disease? There is only one cure, and that is, Crucifixion with Jesus Christ. Observe, not mere crucifixion. You may nail a man's hand—both hands, both feet—and crush thorns into his temple till he is bathed in blood: but you may not touch the devil that is in him. He must be crucified; but he must be crucified with Christ in his spirit, thoughts, purposes. Sympathy with the Cross of Christ takes out of our nature the last drop, the final dreg and sediment of evil, hatred, and bitterness; and nothing but that will touch the disease. We may compromise; we may bear and forbear; we may make our life a game at setting up little pieces of wood, and piling up little cards in a certain shape, keeping every breath of wind away lest the little structure should be overturned. That is not life. The only true life is based on right, love, nobleness, law, charity, kindness. All this you find only in that manly, womanly, godly Heart that burst on Calvary!

The second remarkable thing that you find in this incident is: A religious use of a daily provocation. Peninnah persecuted Hannah daily; laughed at her, mocked her, jeered her, provoked her sore to make her fret; provoked her to tears, to fasting, to grief of heart. Hannah, I read, was in bitterness of soul and wept sore. Now, what use did she make of this daily torment? Don't let us fix our eye upon the one particular thing that she had in view, or the one special difficulty

that annoyed and perplexed her; but get into the principle of the case. What was the use which she made of this daily torment? It was a religious use. She prayed unto the Lord; she rose up and went forward that she might pray mightily before God; she spake in her heart and she poured out our soul before God. That was conquest,—that was victory! There is a possibility of having a daily annoyance, and yet turning that daily annoyance into an occasion of nearer and nearer approach to God. Do not understand me as though I had already attained, and were already perfect in this matter, when I exhort that we are to try to turn daily annoyances, household griefs, family torments into occasions of profound worship and loving homage to God. It was in human nature to avenge the insult; to scream out angrily against the woman who delighted in sneering and in provoking. That would have been human nature. But there is something higher than human nature, something better. And is it not our business,—it is with trembling modesty and self-accusing memory that I speak these words,—is it not better that we should try, at all events, to get away from the human nature, which we are too prone to worship in its generalisation, and seek the divine nature, which has in it the interpretation of every difficulty and the remedy of every affliction? It could not be easy to bear the daily annoyance. A footfall heard in the house might mean a coming sorrow; a sound heard in the distance might awaken painful memories; a turn of a sentence, though it might be unintentional and unconscious on the part of the guilty individual, might afflict the soul. The worst suffering is subtle and unspeakable, and hardly to be told or to be hinted at,—made up of ten thousand little things, any one of which is not worthy of a moment's consideration. Yet here is a woman who was able to triumph over all these things, and to bring them in as helps to her continual prayer.

The third thing that is remarkable about this incident is,—the religious recognition of family mercies. When the son was born—the son for whom she had been praying many a day—she called his name Samuel, "heard of God." Let us dwell attentively on this point, if you please, because everybody is embraced in the application of this truth. We have prayed for a long time for a given object; that object has at length been yielded to us. What then?

"And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. . . . The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail."—ii., 1, 2, 7, 8, 9.

So sang the rejoicing woman whose prayer had been answered. Praise should always follow answered prayer.

It was thus with one man. He was very ill; a great strong man in his day; yet disease touched him, shrivelled him up, laid him upon a lowly bed, made him pray to the humblest creature in his house for favours hour after hour. As he lay there, in his lowliness and weakness, he said,

"If God would raise me up I would be a new man, I would be a devout worshipper in the sanctuary, I would live to his glory." And God gathered him up again; did not break the bruised reed, did not quench the smoking flax, but permitted the man to regain his faculties. And he was not well one month till he became as worldly as he was before his affliction. He prayed as if his heart loved God; and when he got his health back again he was a practical atheist—he was virtually the basest of blasphemers.

It was thus with another man. He had nothing when he came to London. He used to run errands; to sweep, not warehouses, but the door steps of warehouses; and to burnish bells and door-knockers, in order that he might get some little gifts to buy his next meal with; and he went on suffering daily. He said, "If God would but bring a turn upon my fortune so that I could make something, I would turn all his gifts to the blessing of my fellow-men; I would show the true use of riches; I would be a christian; in the midst of my abounding prosperity, I would give a spiritual meaning to all the material gifts of God." His little was doubled, then his little became much, and his much became more, and he became,—what? He would not look at a poor man; he was ashamed to be seen of men who knew him in his low estate; he was a conceited, swaggering fool! Now the reverse in both these cases is possible. It is possible to be lifted up from the bed of affliction and become a burning, shining light in fulfilment of a vow. It is possible to get on from nothing to little, from little to much, and in the midst of abounding prosperity to be a thankful recipient of God's mercies,—a gentle little child,—made for the time being a steward of God's gifts.

Blessed are the men who have had praying mothers. The influence of that fact they cannot shake off. They may curse and swear, and go to the very boundary of the pit, and go into the pit; and I question, whether through all their suffering, they can ever shake off the influence of having had a praying mother. The mother's devotion comes up in the boy's veneration, love of right, conscientiousness, magnanimous hope, gentle courage. As with the boy and the mother, so with the girl and father. Sex is not a physiological question only. I find the sex element in disposition, in thinking, in quality of strength. Blessed are they who have had a praying ancestry. As for us, if there be such, who have not had praying forefathers, there is no reason why we should be lost and thrown away. God is our Father; and when father and mother forsake us, He will take us up. He will lift the beggar from the dunghill and set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory.

So let no man be cast down. Let those who have had praying mothers be charged, as by a captain of the Lord of Hosts, that they go to the front of the fight, and be the most valorous men in God's camp. Let those who have been born into the world, and have had nothing but darkness and sorrow ever since they came into it, know that Jesus Christ receiveth sinners and eateth with them; and that when he looks upon a sinner the sinner is transfigured into the son of Abraham,—as when the morning light looks upon a folded flower it opens its beautiful leaves and shows its thankfulness by telling all the secret of its heart!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou comfortest those that be bowed down. Thou liftest up those whose souls cleave unto the dust. The Lord is very pitiful and kind, and truly his mercy endureth for ever. It comes to us before the light of the morning, it remains with us when the sun has gone, it is our guardian by night, it doth beset us behind and before and defend us from all evil. We desire, therefore, humbly to recognise thy mercy in the whole course of our life; we would see it everywhere giving strength and beauty, and meaning and pathos, to all the affairs of our daily history. Help us evermore to know that our power is in Thy mercy; that we have no strength but in Thy strength; that out of Thy fulness alone, can we receive grace upon grace. Grant us an hour's quietness in Thy house to-day. May we know that we have been released from all worldly memories, from all tormenting anxieties. May our souls be led away into the light! May our spirits be blessed with unspeakable peace! Ever teach us how to pray. May the desires of our heart be pure; may our purposes before God be simple and may our whole supplication rise from the Saviour's Cross that even in our prayers we may know the mystery of self sacrifice. What we pray, we pray in the Mediator's name; there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, through whom, the Child of Bethlehem, the Man of Sorrows, the mighty and only Redeemer of our souls, we offer every desire of our hearts. Forgive our sins! cleanse our thoughts by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Establish Thy counsels in our hearts that they may be repronounced in our daily life; and may our whole course be elevated and sanctified by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now what wait we for, but for the opening of heaven, that we may receive the blessing we have no room to contain, that we may be satisfied with the peace which passeth understanding! Unto the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, whom we adore as Three Persons in one God, be the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, world without end. Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 15, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-FIFTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE SONS OF ELI.

"Men abhorred the offering of the Lord."—1 Samuel, ii., 17.

ELI was high priest of the Jews when the ark of the Lord was in Shiloh. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the Lord. Their office was holy, but their character was corrupt. They touched sacred things with unworthy hands. "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." Their administration of the priestly office was characterised by the most rapacious selfishness. Hence we read "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord." Their evil dealings were the subject of public remark and censure. Eli himself heard of these evil dealings on every hand.

"And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people on every hand. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress."—23, 24.

The social consequences, as might be expected, were dreadful. "Like priest, like people." The fountain was impure, and the stream was consequently defiled. "Men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Men were influenced by their leaders; the people were shocked by the priests. Forms remained; sacrifices were offered; ceremonies were observed. Yet the heart had lost its divine love; and religion, no longer the imperial force of the highest life, had become decayed and noisome. It should be observed, by the way, that this frank statement of priestly corruption is found in the book of God; it is not an enemy who says this. The inspired record is not a one-sided testimony: inspiration does not undertake to make out a case. We are plainly told in God's book that the priests became sons of Belial; that under the Urim and Thummim there were hearts agitated by the vilest passions; that mighty men sold their strength for momentary indulgence; and that wise men were caught in the snare of the fowler. It was not left for an enemy to reveal the blemishes of the nominally good; God himself tore off the mask and probed the sore. This should never be forgotten by enquirers who love truth and yield to the claims of honour. It will not be forgotten by men who wish to know the reality of the case. Let it stand, therefore, first and foremost a ruling and determining truth, that throughout God's word God himself constantly reproaches, condemns, curses all evil; finds out, lifts up, blesses and crowns with his approval all good. The moral tone of the Bible must ever be the Bible's most powerful vindication.

The incident shows but too plainly the vital difference between the *spiritual* and the *official*. Hophni and Phinehas were officially amongst the highest men of their day. They bore a holy name, they pronounced holy words, they were clothed in emblematic robes. Yet Hophni and Phinehas were men of Belial. The outside was beautiful; the inside was full of corruption and death. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

Is there not a lesson here to teachers of Christian truth? It is possible for a man to have a pulpit, and to have no God; to have a Bible, and no Holy Ghost; to be employing his lips in uttering the eloquence of truth, when his heart has gone astray from all that is true and beautiful and good; at the very moment his lips are fired by the words that ought to have converted himself, his heart is not in his work, it is wandering far off yonder, buying and selling and getting gain, sucking in poison where it ought have extracted honey, making the word of God of none effect, and causing the people to blaspheme and alienate themselves from God!

Is there not a lesson here to professors of Christ? We bear the holy name, and men have a right to expect the holy deed. We are to know a discipline that is more than decent, more than socially irreproachable. We need instruction upon the great question of *spiritual* discipline. When a man who professes to know Christ is found drunk in the streets, we expel him from the church, and call that discipline; when a man is convicted of some heinous crime, we cut him off from the fellowship of the church, and call that the discipline of Christian fellowship. It is nothing of the kind; that is mere decency.

There is not a club in the world that cares one iota for its own respectability that would not do the same thing. Ours is to be *Christian* discipline. When Christian discipline comes to play amongst the priests and the professors of Christ, then the covetous man shall be blown away by a whirlwind of righteous indignation; and the man who spoke but one unkind word shall be seen to be a murderer, and shall be driven from the circle of God's people! Who then can stand? Where are Christians, if such be the rule? If an unholy thought be lust,—if the turn of an eye may be practical blasphemy,—if the momentary entertainment of an evil thought, the flash of an evil passion,—if that be held before God to be crime incipient, crime in the germ, crime in reality, who then can stand?

Remember, the accusation does not come from an enemy. We are not entitled to say, "It is a foe who speaks, therefore we heed not his calumnious words." God himself brings charges against his nominal church. "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" So the indictment comes with irresistible force, and we who best know ourselves are dumb before God.

Yet even here is a mystery, a strange and wondrous thing. Hophni and Phinehas, *officially* great and *spiritually* corrupt; minister after minister falling, defiling his garments, and debasing his name; professor after professor pronouncing the right word with the lips, but never realising it in the life. Such is the history of the church. In the face of all this, God still employs men to reveal the truth to other men, to enforce his claims upon their attention. Instead of in a moment of righteous anger sweeping the church floor, so that not a footstep of man might remain upon it, and then calling the world around him, and speaking personally face to face,—he still employs men to teach men, to "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way." We have this treasure in earthen vessels. We are called upon to bear testimony concerning truth,—though we are weak, blundering, incomplete, and very foolish,—though we hardly ever say one sentence as we ought to say it, though we preach a noble doctrine and then throw it down by an ignoble life. Yet God hath not withdrawn that comfort from us. He still says, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." He still says to Peter—with the scars all upon him, unhealed, and never to be taken away, memorials of a great apostacy—"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." He still says to the men who forsook him and fled, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This is not an indication of our weakness when it calls us to that daily continual trust, without which neither high priest nor doorkeeper is safe, the fervent eternal prayer, "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe."

The incident shows the deadly result of corruptness in influential quarters. All quarters, indeed, are influential; yet some are known to be more influential than others, therefore I use this form of expression. The priests were sons of Belial. What was the consequence? The

people abhorred the offering of the Lord. The minister is a bad man. What is the consequence? His character is felt through all the congregation. Men laugh at his speech, jeer at his arguments, and return his persuasions to his own hollow heart. We are commonly advised to consider what is said, rather than look at the person who says it. We should ask, What is the doctrine? not, Who is the preacher? This advice is partly sound, and partly fallacious,—fallacious because superficial and incomplete.

We should remember three things in connection with this advice. First: The natural tendency of men to religious laxity and indifference. This makes us glad of any excuse to move further in that direction. Men are not naturally looking out for spurs and encouragements in the way of righteousness, self-crucifixion, and self-discipline. Their nature rather seems to say, "Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." We eagerly snatch at anything that will afford us a momentary—though we know it to be unsound—justification of laxness, indifference, and even contempt of religious duty and service.

We should remember secondly: The effect of *insincerity* upon doctrine. Sincerity is itself an argument. Men who hear us, look for sincerity in us; otherwise, they have a right to say, "This man cannot teach the true doctrine, if in teaching it day by day he is continually hypocritical, insincere, unaffected by his own speech." Take some very high theory about the business and you may contradict me. But remember what christian doctrine is; then you will see that the moment it enters into the hearer's mind that the speaker is insincere, that consideration has of necessity a powerful and legitimate influence upon the doctrine. Is it possible that I can speak truth with a liar's heart? I know we are to hear what men say who are in Moses' seat, yet not to do as they do. I know that, speaking ideally and abstractly, we ought continually to distinguish between truth and the speaker of truth, when his character is corrupt and inconsistent with his speech. At the same time there is a sense, profound and terrible, in which a man may be answering his own doctrine, overturning his own argument, and writing folly upon his own philosophy. If his lips pronounce the truth, if his heart contradict it and his life blaspheme it, I cannot wonder if men—who have a natural tendency towards religious indifference—should believe the life and deny the lips.

Then we should remember thirdly: The peculiarity of moral teaching in requiring *personal* illustration. Men cannot understand merely theoretic morals; they must have them personified; they must have them taught by incarnation; they must be illustrated in daily life. The artist may teach you to paint a beautiful picture; yet he may have no regard for moral truth. His non-regard for moral truth may not interfere, so far as you can see, with his ability and earnestness as a mere artist. You may go to learn a trade, and your chief in the business may be able to teach it to you completely and to give you a position in the commercial world, useful, influential and profitable; yet that man may tell lies every hour of his life, may break all the commandments of God, and in doing so he may not affect his ability to teach your trade, or

artifice, or profession. It is not so in the church of God. A man's character is his eloquence ; a man's spiritual reality is the argument that wins in the long run ; the soul afire with God's love ; the life that brings out in their beautiful and impressive relief God's exhortations,—these are the things that are most logical, most poetical, most pathetic, most persuasive.

The lesson is to churches. What are we in our corporate capacity ? Are we holy ? If not we are helping to debase and ruin the world ; we have taken God's leverage to help to undo God's work ! It applies to heads of houses. If the father of a family be the only bad character in the family ; how then ? It is hard work for the sons to be fighting always against the supreme influence of the house. How if the father of the family be continually sending out of him vicious, blighting influences, corrupting young life and chilling young hope ? It applies to principals in business ; it applies to leaders of all kinds. In proportion to the volume of our being and the elevation of our position is our power to extend hurtful influences upon the circles that are round about us. The terribleness of a moral leader falling ! The awfulness of a standard-bearer dropping down ! Well may men cry, " Howl fig tree for the cedar has fallen." Is there no call to us who are preachers, teachers, heads of families, principals in business, leaders of circles, great or small ? When one man falls he may jeopardise a whole community. There are men who can fall, and their falling seems to produce but very little vicious influence upon society. There are other men so eminent in position, so established in reputation whose falling would seem to bring down the pillars of civilisation, would seem to bring down the very fabric of God's church ! Herein is another mystery. When priests fall, and ministers play the coward and the liar, and heads of houses eat of the forbidden tree, and influential men go astray,—yet even then God interposes for the truth ; he saves in society the redeeming element, hands it on from the unworthy to the successor who may be more worthy. Thus he preserves the light of the world and the salt of the earth. So God never wants a generation to bless him ; the Redeemer has always near him some who hold his name dearest of all !

On the other hand, we cannot admit the plea that bad leaders are excuse enough for bad followers, when that plea is urged in relation to Christian teaching and life. Nor can we allow that exceptional inconsistency should vitiate the whole church. There are some persons who are only too glad to avail themselves of this plea. The bad man will say, " Why should I care about religious truth or religious observance, when ministers themselves are false to their own doctrine ? Why should I call upon myself to be consistent and true ? " First, such a theory is inadmissible everywhere else. Why, then, should we allow it to affect the church ? There is not a circle in the world where your own theory would be thought tenable for a moment. Why then should we apply it in the highest spiritual relations ? I go into your orchard and point to one piece of blemished fruit, and say, " Because there is a blemish upon that piece of fruit your whole orchard is decayed and corrupt." Would you believe me ? There can found a light coin in every currency in civilisation. Suppose I took up a standard

coin under weight and said, "Because this is not of the standard weight your whole currency is defective, and you are not worthy of trust as a nation of financiers." Would you believe me? I find a man who turns commerce into species of gambling, and because I have found him gaming, I say, "The commerce of Britain is founded upon an illegitimate basis, and is not worthy of a moment's consideration." Would you think me sound in reasoning, fair and noble in my method of dealing with such questions? Yet this is exactly how many persons deal with the church of God. They say, "Look at Hophni and Phinehas; look at the minister who fell; look at the church officer who was expelled from church fellowship because of his dishonourableness and untruthfulness." Because of these exceptional cases they argue that the doctrine is wrong, that every Christian exhortation is a word that ought to be unheeded.

Secondly, such a theory is instantly destroyed by the fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. We do not say, "Look at Christians." We say, "Look at Christ." It is to Christ that we appeal continually; and in that appeal is our strength as christian advocates or expounders of christian truth. When a man says, "Look at the minister," I say, "Look at the Master!" When a man says, "What do you call this?" I say, "I call it a copy: yonder is the original—look at that!" When I am told that christian professors are very unstable and inconsistent, I say, "True; but they are not bad because of their christianity, but because of their want of it." Find in Jesus Christ one instance of selfishness; find in him one moment's wandering from the right way; point out in his speech one unhallowed word or one ungenerous dishonourable expression. His life is before you. Hear me, and be just and true and manly and right! Find me in Christ's life one thing upon which you can lay your finger and say, "This is unholy," then you may pray God's lightnings to strike his church and consume that which bears his name. When will men look at Christ, and not at Christians? at the sun, and not at the little taper? When will they look at the Redeemer, and not at the half-educated, incomplete, struggling, and oft-blundering Church?

Then, thirdly, such a theory is never urged but by men who are in search of *excuses* for their own corruptness. Is that well heard through the house? Will any man undertake to repeat that at home, on 'change, and in the warehouse? That is a sermon in a sentence. Such a theory is never urged but by men who are in search of excuses for their own corruptness. A man says, "When that man who professed so much christianity failed in business, I was on the point of giving up churches and chapels altogether." Doubtless that would be virtuous on his part. Oh! fool and slow of heart to believe the truth of God! When a man who is all skin and bone, who never felt volcanic fire in his heart,—never was led away by some dominating tyrannic passion,—hears of another kind of man straying from the right way, he instantly almost makes up his mind—what he is pleased to call his mind—to leave the church. Oh, fool and slow of heart! Didst thou profess the name of the servant or the name of the Master? Didst thou enter the church because of the high and illustrious example of the mem-

bers of the christian community, or because convicted of sin thou didst crawl to the Cross and feel the healing effect of that falling blood? Where is reasoning—where is common-sense—when men say they have given up their christian profession because some christian professors are fickle, untrue, and inconsistent? No,—I will preach it again! I would to God I could send this tone through London town, through England, through civilisation! I never knew a man yet who made much ado about Christian people's inconsistency who was not—more or less subtly, it might be, with more or less of self-concealment of purpose in the matter—seeking excuses for his own deficiencies, or seeking from his criticism of other people's vice to make his own virtue the more conspicuous.

Here is a wretch—let civilisation bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness—who says to his poor wife, who is a member of the church, because she sometimes has a slip in temper or does now and then what he does not approve, "Ah, that is your christianity, is it? Well, if that be your church and chapel going, I will have none of it." Beast, fiend! There are such creatures to be found. They are to be found amongst men and amongst women. Oh, the unkindness, the cruelty, the heart-slaughter! It were nothing to kill a man,—stab him right through his heart and let him die. But when he is struggling towards light, towards God, and has to fight with all these demoniacal passions and influences round about, over which he seems to have little or no control,—when he just stumbles on the road and they point at him and say, "Ha, ha! that is your christianity, is it?" that is thrice dying, that is intolerable pain! We know we are inconsistent, we know we are selfish, we cannot boast of ourselves. Yet it hath pleased God to be more merciful to us than men are. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. When he smites it is that he may recover; when he puts his sword through a man it is that he may slay, not the man, but the disease that is in him; when he is sharpest with us there are tears in his eyes; when he punishes us most terribly, when he takes away the one ewe lamb, and barks the fig tree, and sends a blight on the wheat field, and turns our purposes upside down,—it is that he may *save* the *man*. When men criticise us and are harsh with us, by reason of their incompleteness their criticism often degenerates into malice. When they point a finger at us, it does not always indicate a fault, but oftentimes a triumph over an inconsistency.

Brethren, where all has been practical and hortatory, might a word of exhortation be added by way of applying the whole subject? We are not to be followers of Hophni and Phinehas. The priest is not God; the minister is not Jesus Christ; the professor is not the Redeemer of the world. We must, therefore, insist upon the honest investigation of *great principles* on the one hand, and specially insist upon the calm, severe scrutiny and study of our Saviour's own personal life and ministry. We have a written revelation. To that revelation our appeal must be made; to the law and to the testimony must be our challenge. As for those whose satire is so keen, and whose wit is so fluent when it is employed in criticism upon christian character, wherein they do it and are able to point out something in us that is wrong,

let us receive the lesson with all meekness; they may be right, and we may learn something from an enemy. It is lawful, according to an ancient maxim, to learn even from a foe. Wherein their criticism is the result of malice, or brief acquantance with our character—seeing only edges and glints of us and not the whole nature—let us remember that our sufferings are not to be compared with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. When he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not; he gave his back to the smiters and his cheek to them that plucked off his hair. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "If any man suffer as a christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God on this behalf." "If we suffer we shall also reign with him." What have we suffered? Is there a man amongst us who can show one blemish for Christ? We may think a great deal of our little sufferings when we view them in themselves; but when we write them out and put them in a parallel column with the sufferings of Jesus Christ, why we are glad to snatch them back again and put them away, and look upon ourselves as petted, spoiled children. We may try them again in another parallel column with the sufferings of the apostle Paul, and the same feeling will return. We shall be glad to take our list of sufferings away and change the subject.

Blessed are they that are reviled for the sake of their goodness. Not many of us have attained that high nobility. We say the age of persecution is now gone. Alas, sirs! all ages seem to have gone; there is nothing left but insipidity. The age of miracles—gone: the age of persecution—gone: the age of speaking with unknown tongues—gone: the age of the devil—gone! Why, what are *we* doing here? It seems that we ought to be going too. Presently we shall be dying of weariness,—we shall be overcome by this intolerable insipidity. The age of persecution has gone, has it? Yes, it has. Why? Perhaps because the age of *godliness* has gone!

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 22, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-SIXTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE HOUSE OF ELI OVERTHROWN.

"And all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age."—1 Samuel, ii., 33.
"And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him."—iii., 18.

IN our last reading we found that Hophni and Phinehas were corrupt men, and that as a consequence the people abhorred the offering of the Lord. We discoursed, therefore, upon the doctrine that bad priests make bad people. To-day we come to the divine visitation of priestly unfaithfulness. Now and again we are permitted to see with startling vividness the Hand which rules, and in which is the rod of power. Now and again God puts aside all ministries and mediations, and shows us all the glory of his personal presence and all the wonderfulness of his irresistible power. We are glad when he retires, for no man can see God and live. Better to have the ministry of the most inexorable, faithful prophet, who never spares the word of judgment or the stroke

of the rod, than stand in the unclouded and blinding blaze of the divine glory. Men prefer sunshine to lightning. They are both, indeed, rays of the divine glory; yet we feel safer under the ordinary daylight than under bolts of electric fire. Let us be thankful, then, that God comes to us through Eli's, through human priests, and through man's ministry being tempered, as it must be, by human limitations, rather than takes us face to face with Himself, and pronounces the word to us without minister or medium. At the same time we are made stronger, we are made tremblingly glad by occasional glimpses of His personality. Yet we are thankful that he puts a veil over His face, and communes with us by voices with which we are familiar. Hophni and Phinehas were evil-minded men; Eli was afflicted with weakness which dipped down sharply towards wickedness; and therefore God came out of his hiding-place to vindicate righteousness, to sweep the floor of his church, and to use his great winnowing-fan.

Eli might have excited one's pity but for the misdirection of his amiability. There is nothing wrong in amiability, in paternal kindness, in fatherly forbearance and gentleness, within the limits of the household. Contrariwise, there is much that is beautiful and impressive and educational about such paternal administration. But no man may be amiable towards wickedness. The whole doctrine is found in that one sentence. Be amiable, kind, forbearing towards infirmity, natural defect, towards things that are of little or no consequence when compared with the verities of the eternal God. But when a man winks at an evil deed, he deserves the condemnation and wrath of God. When a man is tolerant of evil he himself becomes wicked. This is a doctrine which sometimes has severe application, and exposes a man to terrible reprisals; because people who look at comparative virtue, and not at holiness itself, always have the *tu quoque* ready for any faithful prophet, for any light-speaking and rod-using minister of God. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord! If we can keep our garments unspotted from the world we shall have proportionate power over men; though even then there will not be wanting censorious critics who will be quick with their malicious repartee, pointing at a speck as though it were a blot which even God himself could never wash out of our life. Eli was an easy-going indulgent old man; he was more than that. Tell us that at his own fireside his children could trifle with him, mock him, and could turn him into a family joke. Well, it was a very naughty thing for them to do. But Eli was a priest, Eli was the high priest of the Lord; and when a man's character sinks below his office, he involves himself in complications of evil which ultimately ruin his life. The office requiring strength and character, which is distinguished by nothing but the most senile weakness,—when they get together you have a contradiction which involves terrible moral consequences.

In discoursing upon the overthrow of the house of Eli, we may be able to put all the matter before us under two divisions,—*Personality* and *doctrine*. There were two persons employed in connection with this communication of terrible intelligence to the old high priest. The first is merely described as "a man of God." So far as the page before me goes we have to deal with an anonymous communicant. Here is no

great historic name; here is no illustrious reputation to sustain the man's words. He steps out of obscurity, as it were, and is known by the imperishable name, "a man of God." That is the one name that will do for all worlds, through all ages. You need not have "a man of God" described, ticketed, and detailed. When a man of God confronts you, he brings with him atmosphere and light and moral credentials which instantly show that he has been with Jesus and learned of him. There may be teachers who can analyse the character of a man of God. I prefer not to attempt any such analysis. Better let the character stand there, hear all he says, listen to his overpowering speech, and we shall soon know whether he hath learned his accent in the court of Heaven. He was a terrible speaker! Did ever mortal speech exceed in massiveness, in thunderous force, in terrific all-cleaving might, the speech which this anonymous messenger delivered to Eli, and which we have read as our morning lesson?

"Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age."—ii., 30—33.

That was a terrible speech to make to an old man whose life was all behind him, who was now tottering on the last edge! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Ministers of God are required to come up to this point of faithfulness, now and again; to have to say these words, terrible as lightning at midnight, right to the old man, when nobody else is there to hear,—to thunder to one man,—to shake the universe round one poor old man! It is nothing to preach to a crowd. Our words are so distributed and divided, and, where they are unpleasant, are so handed on from one to another and finally thrown out of doors, that the speaker incurs but little danger of rousing the malice and damning spite of his hearers. Therefore our ministry is a poor tame thing,—a noonday luxury,—something we like by the way and care nothing for. But when the man of God comes and talks to one auditor,—and when that auditor feels, by reason of his solitude, that every syllable is meant for him alone,—you go far to test the strength of a man's character and the extent of a man's moral capacity. Eli was a priest, the speaker was a man of God. Man first, priest second; life original, office secondary. Eli was high priest, and the man who confronted him was a man of God. There is something deeper in the *human* than the *sacerdotal*. Robbers and thieves have come to Christ's fold, and Christ said, "My sheep would not follow them." Sometimes the sheep are wiser than the shepherd. I have faith in the instincts of of humanity, in the general judgment of an unbiassed congregation. I have faith in people, in humanity; not in ephods and mitres and staves of office,—but in that divine, living, imperishable spirit which God has put into redeemed and sanctified beings. Surely this message was

enough for one day. Who can bear such thunder from the morning even until the evening?

The next messenger that came was a little child. This is how God educates us, by putting tutors on both sides, behind and before. You hear a man who tells you what to you may be evil tidings,—sharp, startling messages to your judgment and to your conscience,—and you say, "The man is a fanatic." You walk away, and before you have got a mile further a little child gets up and smiles at you the same message,—says it in smiles, in tender looks, in trembling child-like tones,—and you begin to think there is something in it. You go further, and the atmosphere seems to be charged with divine reproaches and divine messages. So you go on, until the oldest, best, and stateliest men tremble under subtle, impalpable, all-encompassing, irresistible influences. There are some testimonies which require confirmation. There are some sermons which are so terrible that they cannot be believed on the spot. Some men have such a way of speaking—piercing, crushing—that when they are heard the auditor says, "This cannot be so; it is an exaggeration." So God hath appointed elsewhere child-priests, little prophets, young ministers, unexpected interpreters of his heart and will. When the thunder and the gentle breeze unite in speaking the same message men begin to open their ears to it—to cause their hearts to listen to the strange, the bitter, yet the most needful word. Very beautiful is this part of the story detailed,—the part, namely, which relates to Samuel, the little child about the holy place who did not know the Lord. Samuel had no acquaintance with God. That is a most important point to observe. Let us read the exact words of the narrative:—

> "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him."—iii., 7.

Still it is right to be waiting about the temple; you never know what you may hear. Men don't come into the temple because they know *all* about God; they come if haply they may get any hint about him, any initial lesson about that wondrous Being who carries all other life in his own eternal pulse. Is there nobody here who does not yet know the Lord? to whom as yet the word of the Lord has not been revealed? Do not desist from coming to the house of God; you may some day hear a message immediately from the Lord.

This incident brings before us some of the most *solemn moments* of life. Life is not one long holiday. Life is not to be spent upon one continuous level. There are some single moments in our life which make us old. There are some visions, which take but the flash of an eye to look at, which make us old men. Look at Samuel, for the first time hearing of God. Is it not a solemn moment when we get our first notion of the infinite? Can you recall your mental sensations or spiritual condition when you first began to feel that yonder distant, dim horizon is but a trembling, almost transparent curtain, and that just behind it, so to speak, lies God's eternity? After such a moment as that a man can never, if he has made a right use of it, fall back into the littleness and contemptibleness of the life that thinks the world a nutshell,

that calls time all duration. Some of us have had these solemn moments in our life ; when we have heard a Voice we did not know, and from that moment we have never ceased to hear it ; it has been the sub-tone of all that has reached our ear, it has been in the hum of all nature, it has been louder than the thunder, it has been softer than softest zephyr of the spring. A man is never great until he knows all about that solemnity of which I have now spoken. The child who hears a voice, naturally thinks it is a human voice. Can any be so human as God's ? Thou canst not thunder with a voice like him ; thou canst not speak in so fatherly and motherly a tone either. Herein is the incarnation mystery,—God always showing his power to talk humanly, and to shoot out the lightning of his word from human lips. God has always during the history of the world been incarnating himself.

Samuel is taught that there is a voice other than Eli's. The old man has still force enough left in him to speak this wondrously beautiful word to the bewildered child, groping about in the darkness, "When thou hearest the voice again say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." That is what we are called upon to do ; to be listeners, receivers, mediums of God. My friend, have you ever seen beyond your own shop ? Do you know that there is a world larger than little England ? that over that little thimble-ful of water, which you call the sea, there are other countries ? It is a difficult thing for an Englishman to believe that there is any other land, very difficult for an islander to believe in a continent. But really there are other places besides England, I am told. Are there no other places than the world which we call "the great globe itself" ? There may be. Why then should we be compressing ourselves, minifying ourselves, and getting into the most microscopic compass ? Why not pray for larger life, larger intellectual dominion, higher, sublimer moral sympathies ? Why not, having infinitude around us, set ourselves as if we meant to take in as guest and king the whole God ? You will never know what life is until you have passed this solemn moment which occurred in the history of Samuel, at the point to which we have now come. The non-religious man is not alive. Some of us are prepared to testify that we never knew what greatness was, what immeasurableness was, and what majesty was, until through Christ's life we had one peep into the incomprehensible eternity and infinity of God !

Now we can believe the man of God, who speaks the keen, cleaving word, or we can believe the gentle little Samuel, who comes and puts in monosylables the thunders of the divine will. They are both the same ; only some men cannot stand the man of God—He crushes them, he is a tyrant—an imperial, dominating man, in the way of whose arm there is death ! Well, let such be thankful that they can hear the same message—not in a less noble music or tender strain, so far as the man's intent is concerned—from children, from other ministers and interpreters of God.

With regard to the doctrine brought out in connection with these events, it is plain, in the first place, that God requires *holiness* in all who serve him. Why were Hophni and Phinehas dismissed with divine

reproaches? Because they were wanting in original thought? We now dismiss ministers from small, dirty conventicles because they are not very original. I do not learn that Hophni and Phinehas were dismissed from the priest's office because they were wanting in vitality and freshness of brain power. Why were they dismissed? Because they were behind the age? The age! Oh, what a ghost that age is to some people. I do not read that Hophni and Phinehas were dismissed because they were behind the age,—but because they were corrupt men. Corruptness cannot be atoned for by genius. Gifts are no substitute for grace. Better be the poorest, slowest, dullest thinker; better be a man of stammering tongue, than be the most brilliant and gifted man who does not know what it is to be under the power of divine grace. Holiness, then, is the fundamental requirement in all persons who would interpret God and serve him in any department of the great ministry of his kingdom. Holiness is genius. Holiness hath keen, piercing eyes that sees every filament of divine truth and holy communication to men. When the ministry is holy, when the church is holy, when every man, high priest and door-keeper, is holy, then the world will begin to feel that there is something in it that is not of its own nature.

It is evident, also, in the second place, that all the covenants of God are founded upon a moral basis. "I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever." There is the bond, there is the covenant of God repeated by a servant. How, then, can Eli be overthrown? How can Hophni and Phinehas be dismissed from their office? "But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me." Is the Lord fickle then? Is he man that he should change? is he the son of man that he should repent? "Be it far from me." Why? "For them that honour me I will honour, and they that dispise me shall be lightly esteemed." Where is God's unchangeablenes in the shape of trees and plants, in the order of the stars and the worlds, in any outside appointments, arrangements, and adaptations? Where do I find the unchangeableness of God? Along the line of righteousness. When he speaks, he speaks upon a moral basis; all that he says is conditioned upon moral purposes. Hath he promised thee, oh man, and art thou living upon that promise? Know thou, that the promise is always secondary; the character is primary,—righteousness first. If the first archangel whom he summoned into his own solitude were to sin against him, he would dethrone the oldest of his angels and banish him into outer darkness! Let us look at details, at outside arrangements, and see if this is fickle on the part of Providence, or changeableness of disposition on the part of God. Go to the first line—the great line on which all true things are built, all lasting empires and monarchies are founded—and you will find that along the line of righteousness God never moves to the right hand or to the left,—on from eternity to eternity, never a break or a deflection in the line of infinite righteousness!

In the third and last place, it is evident that some of the communications of God are at first very startling and terrible. Think of little Samuel making his acquaintance with the Lord through a speech like

this! Understand that at the beginning Samuel did not know the Lord; that he received from Eli instruction as to his position; that having assumed that position, the introductory words of the divine communication are these:—

> "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle."—iii., 11.

It is a child in whose ear this awful message breaks! Why, it would have driven some of us mad! we could not have borne all that weight at the very first! God adapts his communications to those to whom they are addressed. We do not all come upon God at the same point. God's first message to us is not the same in every case. Herein, then, there is scope for charity—the charity that is just and noble when we are estimating the religious experience of men. I am not to say that, because you did not hear exactly as I heard, therefore you are wrong and I am right. When you heard God first he came to you along the trembling pathways of the thunder, and your religion is a sublimity. When your neighbour first knew God, he heard him with much and intense listening,—it was a still small voice that stole in upon the ear of his soul, and his religion has always been a tune in the minor key; he has been, perhaps, somewhat pensive, contemplative, and never quite lost the attitude of his first listening; he seems to be listening still, and to be afraid lest a footfall should break the continuity of the divine message. When another first met God, he came to him through the process of argument: the man was broken down by sheer force of reasoning, so far as his intellectual positions were concerned; he saw his theories and speculations broken down, blown away, pulverised, and scattered on the flying winds; and his religion has been logical, argumentative, propositional; and whenever he has gone to hear a minister, he has stopped the minister at every sentence to say, "Prove it." So God comes to us in different ways. We are not to judge one another by our own standard, but let every man show by the clearness and simplicity and nobleness of his life, whether or not he has had a communication from God.

I have spoken of holiness,—a word we can but dimly understand upon the earth. One day we shall recollect the sun as a poor pale little beam that we could just manage to do with, by using our eyes very sharply and putting our hands before us lest we should fall over something. One day we shall think of our professed sanctification as a poor morality. I have, however, spoken of holiness. The question may be asked by some anxious heart, How is this holiness to be had? In one way. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." "There is a fountain open in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon." I cannot say any more than that. Some before me, ministers of Christ, have been saying that for twenty-five years, for forty years, and they assure me they can find no better thing to say. It is the same with me in my own ministry, to whatsoever

part of the great universe of truth I may go. If any man ask me how to get up there, I have to point to the old way,—the Cross of Christ, who tasted death for every man; I have to point to the atonement made by the Lamb of God! I want no other way. I never feel my need of any other way. When I have tried any other path, I have only had to be brought into some deeper sorrow and sorer agony to call out after the living God to help me back again to the old way of the Cross. Try it, my friend. He who walks that road finds his way to Heaven!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, it is a fearful thing to fall into Thy hands! Thy throne is established in righteousness and judgment. The liar and the evil person shall not live in Thy sight; Thou art angry with the wicked every day; Thou givest no peace unto them; Thou withholdest all enduring blessings from those whose hearts go astray from righteousness. Thou dost drive the priest from priesthood, the minister from his pulpit, the head of the house from his family circle. Thou drivest out the evil-minded man, Thou scourgest those who know not Thy purity and Thy love, Thou vindicatest the righteousness of Thy name by terrible judgments in the earth. We come to Thee as the God of mercy as well of judgement. We are now on praying ground; we may now plead mightily with Thee for the exercise of Thy pardoning mercy, lest we too be condemned and carried in the whirlwind of Thy just anger. God be merciful unto us sinners! save us in the hour of temptation; deliver us when the enemy would carry us away captive at his will; and when the great enemy of souls would come in as a flood, do Thou lift up Thy spirit as a standard against him. If Thou dost hold us up we shall be safe; if Thou dost loose Thine hand from ours, behold, we cannot stand! Have us in Thy holy keeping; establish our hearts in the precepts and statutes of all Thy will; and grant that having served our day and generation with all simplicity, trust, meekness, and strength, we may be called to enter into the rest eternal as Thine own being! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, June 29, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE CAUSES OF ELI'S OVERTHROW.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever."—1 Samuel, iii., 11—14.

OUR subject last Thursday was the overthrow of the house of Eli. So great an event as the overthrow of a consecrated house ought not to be allowed to pass without careful enquiry into its causes. It is the more important because of a statement in the second chapter of the book that we are now reading: "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me." If we once get the notion that God's covenants are not to be faithfully carried out on his part, our moral foundations are destroyed and our confidence is shaken. For this reason, let us pause at this great breach of a

covenant supposed to have been eternal, and let us ask how that breach came to be made. It must be noted that God himself annulled the covenant. Eli did not say that he wished for release from the bond. Eli did not complain of difficulty or incapacity. The word of rupture was spoken by God himself, thus: "But now the Lord saith, Be it far from me. Let the covenant which was made for ever between me and thee be far from me. I said the covenant was to be an everlasting covenant, and to-day I recall it. Thy house shall perish." We are shocked by such words. The conscience of man asserts a kind of right to have such words explained. Life would not be worth having but for profound and complete trust in God's honour. It were crime on his part to lift us almost to heaven that he might dash us into the abyss of outer darkness! The covenant was made for ever, yet God annulled it! We pause, as earnest men having some regard for social honour, to know how an eternal covenant can be set aside. The case grows in difficulty, and, to the eye of the mere artist, it increases in dramatic interest as we call to memory the many points of excellence in the character of Eli. Can you find one vulgar sin in the venerable high priest? He was a man of advanced life, and therefore he had had opportunities of displaying his real quality. He was ninety and eight years old; his eyes were dim, that he could not see; he had judged Israel forty years. What of his character? Why was he dispossessed of the priesthood? Was he a drunkard, an adulterer, a liar, a thief, a blasphemer? There is not a tittle of evidence to justify the faintest suspicion of the kind. Nay, more. We can give Eli still higher praise than this: for, after having carefully read his life, as it is detailed in this book, I see not why Eli might not stand most favourable comparison with many of the leading christians of our day. I cannot see, looking at the page in the light of a merely literary critic, where the great lapse was. I know not but that if Eli, as portrayed in the inspired page, were set up as the standard of determination, a great many of us would fall short of his lofty altitude. These considerations justify the interest of the question how Eli came to be dispossessed of the priesthood.

Look at his noble treatment of the child Samuel. He knew that Samuel was called by the Lord to occupy an official position in holy places; he knew that Samuel was, at least in all probability, to succeed him in his sacerdotal functions. Yet what an absence of the usual elements of rivalry! When did he chide the little prophet? when did he superciliously snub the child? when did he flaunt all his own greatness in the eyes of the little one, and use his power as an instrument of terror, that Samuel might render him homage? Did he ever nibble at the character of Samuel? Did he ever try to reduce the importance of Samuel's probable position in life? Did he point out blemish after blemish in the child's character, and deficiency after deficiency in the child's gifts? It is becoming in rivals to traduce one another. If you cannot actually slay a man, yet it is permissible, by the rules of this honourable rivalry, to scratch him. Yet I find in Eli's treatment of Samuel nobleness, magnanimity,—want of all the little miserable tricks which are made use of by men who seek to enhance their own glory by diminishing the lustre of others.

Look at the unpriestliness of his tone when he talks to the child. Samuel came to Eli in the hour of darkness and said, "Thou didst call me." Eli said, "No, my child, I did not call thee." Samuel came again, and yet again. What did Eli do, knowing that Samuel had heard a voice more than human? Did Eli say to Samuel, "Pay no heed to such voice, little child. I am the high priest of God. If thou dost see a spectre or vision, or hear an unearthly voice or tone, be not led away superstitiously by these things; but come to me, and I will instantly tell thee all about it, and determine what thou hast to do." That would have been the talk of a priest; that is the native accent of a true priest. Yet Eli said to the child, "It is God that calleth thee; go and speak to him face to face; stand before him and say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Why, that was not priestly at all; that was putting a man face to face with the Eternal, and clothing the soul with responsibilities which never can be transferred.

Looking at this aspect of Eli's character, I feel a reverence for the old man. I see that he was a fine interpreter of the supernatural section of life. He was not self-obtrusive; he was no mere priest; he introduced men immediately to God; he did not claim any power of exclusive or tyrannic mediation. Look, again, at the submissiveness of his tone when his doom was pronounced. When he was told that his house would be rooted up, that both his sons should die on one day, that the judgment of the Lord had set in against him and his successors, what did he say? Remember, he was nearly a hundred years old; his eyes were dim; for forty years he had maintained a position of supremacy. Men cannot easily throw away the traditions and the social consequence of so long-continued an elevation. Yet when the old man heard his doom, he said, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth good in his sight." How many of us could have shown the same submissiveness, the same religious homage, under circumstances so terrible? An earthquake shaking the foundations of your house,—a storm-cloud pouring out its flood upon your inheritance! Yet Eli was no vengeful priest in that hour; he was no mere self-seeker in that terrible day. Even then, when the foundations were rocking under his feet, and all the surroundings of his life were full of tempestuous and devouring elements. he said, with an old man's tremulous pathos, "It is the Lord." Equal to, "Let God be true, and every man a liar; He is sovereign, I am servant; whatsoever the Judge of the whole earth doeth shall be done in righteousness."

Then look at the man's interest in the ark of the Lord. When that sacred box was taken out into the battlefield and was captured by the Philistines, Eli's heart trembled for the ark of God. Down to the very last, you see, Eli was an intensely religious man, from whom God withdrew his covenant, and on whom He pronounced such severe judgments as these:—

"I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. . . . And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age."

You will understand, therefore, the fervour and the emphasis with which I repeat that the conscience of universal man says, "God of heaven and earth, is this right?" In looking at the failure of Eli as involving a moral question between the Creator and the creature, I am prepared to teach that the obligations of *character* must always control the obligations of *covenants*. All God's covenants are founded upon a moral basis. A covenant is but a form; a covenant is merely an arrangement, if it be not established upon moral conditions. There are circumstances in which God's faithfulness and God's unchangeableness are seen, not in fulfilling, but actually in the annulling, of covenants. God will never maintain the letter at the expense of the spirit. There is a pedantic morality amongst men which says, "The bond must be kept to the letter," and which cares nothing for the spirit of the engagement. God's morality is not a morality of ink and seals and witnesses. It involves life, spirit, motive, purpose. Were God to keep to the letter at the expense of the spirit, he would be no longer God. His unchangeableness is in his righteousness, not in his formality. Our confidence in him is this:—That he will set aside his oldest servants, his first-chosen men, his most princely vicegerents and interpreters,—he will utterly destroy them from the face of the earth, and hurl after them the written covenants he has made with them,—if they trifle with eternal truth, with infinite purity! To cover a corrupt life with the blessing of his approbation, simply because there is a literal covenant to be carried out, would be to deny every element which makes him God.

The answer, therefore, to the question which we put as from the conscience of universal man, is this: Eli, notwithstanding all these points of excellence in his character, is distinctly accused of moral defect. That has now to be proved. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." These words were spoken to Eli by the man of God, who came to him with the divine message. These words are pointless, if they do not imply that Eli had, by some means or other, brought himself into the list of those who despise God. Then again: "I will raise me up a faithful priest." These words are out of place, if they do not clearly suggest that, to some extent or other, Eli had been unfaithful to the divine vocation. Yet again: "I will judge his house for ever for the iniquities which he knoweth. Not for some iniquity of which he is unaware. I will bring up in his life iniquities which he himself has pointed out, as such; which he knows to be wickedness in my sight, and out of his own mouth I will condemn him." Now were God to keep his covenant in the face of such charges, the wicked would in time get advantage over him; the hypocrite might, in the long run, be as God in the world. God shows his godhead in the cancelling of covenants where there has been a decay of character. Understand, this is not a business covenant; it is not a commercial bond; it is not between one man and another; it is between infinite righteousness and a human creature. We are not intitled to say that we may trifle with our human, social, commercial bonds, because there has been a lapse in character here or there. A commercial bond is a commercial bond. I am discoursing now upon covenants between God and man. These covenants cannot exist, except

there be sympathy between the Maker and the creature. Moral sympathy, religious similitude: impair that, and of necessity the covenant is destroyed.

Viewed in this light, there are several impressive lessons urged by God's treatment of Eli. First of all it is clear—and it ought to be made most distinct to many of us, because of a great practical delusion which exists upon this point—that it is not enough that there be many good points in a character. Character ought not to be a mere question of *points* at all. Character ought not to be viewed in sections and departments, in aspects and occasional moods. Character should have about it the distinctness of wholeness, entirety. Our goodness is not to be an occasional impulse or a transitory appearance of moral conscience and moral concern for others. Out of our character there is to stream continuous and beneficent influence. We lose when we can be talked about in sections. It is no compliment when we have to take out of a character three or four good points and say to those who look on, "Observe these; whatever defects there may be in the character, don't overlook these redeeming points." When we can talk so about ourselves and about others, it is not a compliment, it is a sign of incompleteness. When our moral training is perfected we shall not have points of excellence; our whole character shall be massive, indivisible, and out of it shall go an influence that shall constrain men to believe that we have been with God, and that we have imbibed the very spirit of his righteousness.

Eli was *amiable.* A great many mistakes are made about amiability. A man may be amiable simply through mere want of interest or force; he may be so constituted, that really he does not much care who is who or what is what. He may have a senile grin—call it a smile if you please—for anybody and for all persons alike,—a nice old man who never says a cross word, and never has a frown upon his face. That is not amiability. Here is a man who is naturally unamiable; he looks with a discriminating eye upon man and things; he is very passionate, fiery, self-asserting. Yet, by the grace of God, he is kept back; at times he shakes in the leash; he often seems as if he would break it and be away! Yet God's hold upon him is such that he speaks gentle words, restrains terms of indignation and wrath, moderates his rising passion. There,—though he cannot look very amiable, though he may have a grim face,—is the amiable man.

Eli had *religious* impulses. What then? There is a sense in which religious impulse may be but *constitutional.* It is more natural for some people to pray than others. It comes easier to some men to go to church than for others to go. We must not overlook the constitutional condition. I heard a man say the other day that there were two things in the world he could not stand; these two things were, sermons and lectures. I did not condemn the man; it was not worth my while going into a rage with him; I saw by his very make that sermons and lectures could not stand *him.* He would have been a mighty preacher who could have talked to such an auditor. Eli had religious impulses; but religious impulses are not enough. I have known a drunken man knock a Roman Catholic down, because the papist said, "John Wesley

is in hell." Was the drunken man a religious character? No. But he had religious emotions, impulses, sensibilities, and even when he was intoxicated, he would have preferred a hymn to a ribald song. Let us clearly understand, therefore, as earnest fellow-students of these things, that mere religious sensibility, religious impulse and religious susceptibility, must not be understood as proclaiming and certifying sound religiousness of character.

Eli treated Samuel without official envy or jealousy. So far so good. We commend Eli for abstinence from such interference with Samuel, and criticism of the child as would have been small and contemptible in one occupying the lofty position of the high priest of the Jews. But absence of envy may come of mere easy good nature. There are men in the world who do not care one pin-point who is at the head of affairs. That is not magnanimity that is not nobleness. Here is nobleness. The man who wants to be at the head of affairs himself, and feels considerable consciousness that he would be able to sustain the position; he longs for it, works for it, hopes for it day and night. Yet, there is a young man put above him, set on the chief seat, and he himself is kept down. It would be natural for that man to shake an angry hand in the face of his succesful rival. Yet, by the grace of God he says, "I bid thee God's speed." He says it perhaps with some difficulty; it does not escape him with that roundness and fervour of tone with which it would escape another man; but he does say it; says it from the heart, and the very reluctance of the speech is a sign of its sincerity. That is the man who has, by the power of the Holy Ghost, subdued the devil of jealousy and triumphed over the fiend whose name is envy!

The second lesson that is urged upon us by this view of Eli's position is,—that *divine discipline* is keen—intensely spiritual. I remarked upon this in my last lecture; yet the importance of it justifies me in recurring to it. I have asked, Can you point to any vulgar sin in the high priest? When I said vulgar I had a special object in the choice of that word. The enquiry is, Can you point out any vulgar sin in Eli? Sin is not measureable by vulgarity. Some of us seem incapable of seeing sin until it clothes itself in the most hideous forms. Forms have nothing to do with sin. Sin is sin before it takes form. Herein we see the keenness, the spirituality of divine discipline. Herein, the church, as we said in our last reading, fails in its purely spiritual mission. Let me repeat myself upon this point. A man is expelled from the church because he is found drunk in the streets. We cannot call that church discipline. It is simple decency, common respectability; it is not christian discipline. Christian discipline would have applied itself to the man when he was longing for the drink; when he was drunk in his soul, before he touched the accursed cup. A man is expelled from the church because he has committed manslaughter. That is not christian discipline; that is legal discipline, magisterial discipline. Society will expel him. The church should have expelled him when he was angry without a cause; when it was known that a bad passion had raged in his heart, and he had spoken some unkind, ignoble word. At that point,—invisible, impalpable, subtle, known only in all its significance to God, and understood only by those who understand the righteousness

of law as revealed by God,—at that point christian discipline would have interposed and asserted the law of right. The church cannot have discipline except in its most common forms. Discipline would destroy the church. Discipline would empty every pulpit and disband every christian assembly, if applied in all the keenness and intensity of its divine spirituality. Then let us regard the church as an hospital; let us regard the church as an infant school; let us regard the church as striving after, not as having attained, the fulness of the divine idea; and having come to that conclusion respecting the visible church of Christ, let us have compsssion on some, making a difference—let us be charitable one towards another.

We see, further, in this case, the terribleness of God's displeasure. "I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth. I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." These are terrible words. Yet, if they were less terrible we should have less confidence in God. If any one could be more terrible than God, we should not worship him. The measure of his love is the measure of his wrath; the height of his mercy is the height of his judgment. Terrible is a bad man's fate! He cannot elude God. He may have success; but in his very success he will find a sting which will inject poison into his life, and destroy sweet, profound, refreshing rest! He starts on a war, the end of which is known from the beginning, who starts to war against God.

I would that this doctrine could follow us all through our life. I do not invite men to accept Christ because there is a terrible pain following the course of unrighteousness. That is not preaching the gospel. I do not want to dwell upon the punishments that befal a bad man with any wish of drawing him from his course because of those punishments. I have never been able to preach in that kind of way. But this I do wish to say distinctly, that the bad man has a painful course before him. Do not leave it on that account! The serpent shall bite you and the adder shall sting you, but don't give it up on that account! The wild beast shall shut his jaws upon you, but don't be righteous on that account! The earth won't have you, the sea won't cover you, hell won't burn you, but don't come to Christ on that account! Be a man; "be a hero in the strife!" I do not preach that men should be good because God will lay the hand of judgment upon them. No man would turn on that account. But the way of the transgressor is hard; he is making a hard pillow for his head. Be he high priest or doorkeeper; be he mighty in gift or obscure in talent,—God will not spare him. If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear! "I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." You start the stream, you cannot dam it back!

What, then, have we to break up our morning sitting with these hard words? No. Hear Jehovah. "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is

lawful and right, none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him, he shall surely live." So, then, " my song shall be of mercy and judgment." Penitence is the one condition in which human souls can find God. We preach repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." " Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thought ; let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

So we shall break up, you see, with words that sing,—with words that shine upon our life like angels sent down from heaven ! We have all sinned : the preacher and the hearer, the old man whom God called into his priesthood, and the little child who was but yesterday born into the holy kingdom. " There is none righteous, no not one." Were God to set his mark upon one sin in a thousand and judge us for it, who could stand before Him ! But we go to Jesus Christ, God the Son, Messiah,—God ! and we find our infinite security in the fulness of his righteousness, and in the worthiness of his all-pervading mediation.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, we have transgressed against Thy covenant, and Thy commandments have often been of none effect in our lives. We have forgotten God. We have lived in ourselves ; we have been our own law ; we have been our own gods. Truly, Thou hast been angry with us. Thou hast scourged us until our life has become a daily pain. Thou hast impoverished us until we have seen the emptiness and vanity of our own resources. Now take us to Thine heart again. Come through the dark cloud of Thy judgment, and in answer to our penitence speak comfortably to our souls. We seek Thee only through the covenant which Thou didst make with Thy dear Son. We stand behind him. Our hearts are safe in the infinite security of his righteousness and compassion. Give us joy in Thy house,—yea, fill us with the peace of God ! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 6, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-EIGHTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE ARK OF GOD.

"Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hands of our enemies."—1 Samuel, iii., 4.

IN order to understand the full import of these words, we must carefully study the idea which the ark of the Lord was intended to represent. The twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Exodus gives a most minutely detailed account of the making of the tabernacle. God gave Moses a special description of the proposed sanctuary. He did not consult Moses, nor did he make suggestions which Moses was to submit to the consideration of the people of Israel. God laid down the whole plan, and no more left anything to be settled by the taste of Moses than he left Noah to determine the colours of the rainbow. As he said to Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" so he might have said to Moses, "Where wast thou when I designed the tabernacle?" There

was not a ring, a knop, a socket, a coupling, or a pin which God himself did not specifically design. Was it not like him? Is there anywhere one sprig of moss which owes its humble beauty to any hand but his own? As the tabernacle was built for the sake of the ark, and not the ark for the sake of the tabernacle, it becomes most important to know what the ark was, and what spiritual meaning the symbol was intended by Almighty God to signify. Listen to the holy word: "Thou shalt make an ark; thou shalt overlay it with pure gold; thou shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about; thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee; thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold; thou shalt put the mercy seat above the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there will I meet thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all the things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

The ark is called by various names. In Exodus it is called the ark of the testimony; in Deuteronomy it is called the ark of the covenant; in the first of Samuel it is called the ark of the Lord; and in the same book it is called the ark of God. What was this ark? Looked at materially, the ark of the covenant was a box or chest, fifty-four inches long, about thirty inches broad, and about thirty inches high. The box was overlaid with pure gold. The lid or cover of the ark was called the mercy seat. Upon the mercy seat were two golden cherubim, one at either end, facing each other, and covering the mercy seat with their expanded wings. At the mercy seat—the lid of this box—God promised to meet Moses and commune with him. Hence, God was said to dwell between the cherubim. The ark contained the two tables of stone on which God had written the ten commandments. "I will write on the tables the words that were written on the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark." In the first of Kings we read there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb. The ark was placed in the holy of holies; indeed it is called in the first book of Chronicles, "the house of the mercy seat."

Let us now stand beside that box and consider its meaning, that we may be prepared to discourse upon the text. In the box you find the commandments of God. The box is not merely in the holy house,—it is in the holiest place of the holy house. In the very midst of that box you find only the written law of the Most High. Keep that picture before you, if you would understand the spiritual significance of the symbol. As with the box in the tabernacle in the holy of holies, containing the written law of God, so with creation to-day. The great moral idea never changes. The chest is destroyed, the golden cherubim may no longer be found; but the moral purpose, the moral intent, is the same now and for ever. Penetrate into the highest place in the universe—go higher than the clouds, higher than the sun, higher than the farthest star—pass, if you may, into the secret solitudes of God, where human strife and din are never heard—and *there*, at the very centre, in the great solemn heart of all systems and

powers, you find,—What? The law of God! This is at once a terror and a security. The spirit of judgment quickens all creation. Out of everything there comes a fire which scorches the bad man's hand. Wherever a good man goes a blessing approves and confirms his steps. For a moment the bad man may seem to bend things according to his own will: but "the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming, when he shall fly away as a dream and shall not be found,—yea, he shall be chased away like a vision of the night!" Some of us could not live but for this reflection. Life would be a constant temptation to us, unmingled with any element of mercy. It is something to know, and deeply to feel, that all things are bound together by law,—that at the heart of the universe there is a written statute and covenant. It gives steadiness to life; it defines relations, rights, consequences; it enables a man to view with composure all the flutter and dust of the little day, and to draw himself forward by the power of an endless life. This, then, is part of the teaching of the symbolic ark. In the holy of holies we find the sacred chest covered with gold, watched by the cherubim, and in that hallowed chest is hidden the law written by the finger of God. That law is subtle as life. You are assured of its presence; you are encompassed by a mystery which is never withdrawn for a moment; you cannot explain it; you are punished when you resent it; you are at rest when you obey it; your very liberty is but a phase of restraint!

Happily, this is but part of the teaching of the ark. Over the ark there is a lid. Very special were the instructions given to Moses respecting it. The lid was the mercy seat, the propitiatory. It was there—not on the tables of stone graven with the law of God—but on the lid, the covering of the ark, that God promised to meet Moses. Now see how the case stands when you put both sides of it together. There you have the sovereign, unchangeable, inexorable law of God; and over it you have the covering of God's tender mercy. When we look at the law, we look at it through the mercy, because the mercy covers it. When the law comes to us, it comes up through the mercy, because the mercy overlies it. All law now comes to us through the mediation of mercy. "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." What then? At the very centre of the human system we have law and mercy, righteousness and love, sovereignty and sacrifice. Creation says, "My song shall be of mercy and judgment." Society is not a chaos; creation is not an aggregate of unrelated fragments. Amid all the din, confusion, stress, and upset of life, there is, at the heart of things, a law unchanging as God,—a mercy ever enduring, ever pitiful.

This brief sketch of the ark of the covenant and its spiritual significance, will enable many to follow with intelligence the varying fortunes of Israel, which have ever been associated, more or less directly, with this ark. We want a book written upon the ark of the Lord. Seek out its history; see what becomes of the people according to their treatment of this ark; see how one little thing rules all things,—how the heart-beat palpitates to the extremities of the universe! I counsel this to you youthful students:—Make this your subject,—the ark of the covenant;

its structure, its typified doctrine, its relation to the history of a nation, and the eternal principles which come out of this symbolical representation of God.

In the case before us, the Philistines had slain of the men of Israel about four thousand. When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" This is an enquiry which men should always put to themselves in times of disaster and failure. "Why has God withdrawn me from the crowd and made an invalid of me, and shut me up in this shaded chamber? Why has God sent a blight upon my wheat fields and olive yards, so that there should be no produce? Why hath God barked my fig tree and taken away from me my one ewe lamb—spoiled the idol of my love? Is there not a cause?" So far, the men were acting upon a principle of common-sense. Every effect has its cause. Four thousand dead men of Israel are lying upon the field, slaughtered by the sword of the Philistines. Why? Admire sagacity, common-sense, wherever you find it.

But observe what a mixture is presented by the text. "Let us," said the elders of Israel, "fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us it may save us out of the hands of our enemies." The ark had been at Shiloh from the days of Joshua, during the ministry of all the Judges. And now suddenly the leaders of Israel, with four thousand dead men lying about them, say, "Let us fetch the ark." They brought the ark, and when the ark of the covenant came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again! The Philistines said, "What is this? they are bringing their god into the field!" and the Philistines trembled. Notwithstanding this, the Philistines gathered together their courage, came against Israel, and Israel was smitten, and the ark of God was taken.

There must be some lessons here. Learn that the formal is useless without the spiritual. There is the ark, made as God dictated,—a sacred thing; the law is there; the mercy seat is there. Yet Israel falls by the arms of the Philistines, and the sacred shrine is taken by the hands of the idolaters. There is nothing strange in this. The formal never can save men; the institutional never can redeem society. A mere observance, a ceremony, a form, can never touch the dead heart of the world. This is, emphatically, the day of bringing in arks, societies, formalities, ceremonies. You have in your house an altar: that altar will be nothing influential in your life if you have it there merely for the sake of formality. A man who cannot altogether throw away the traditions of his lifetime,—who hears, it may be, a parent's voice, saying to him in secret, again and again, "You promised me to do so and so,"—and in fulfilment of that promise he may snatch up the ark of the covenant, the law of God, hastily read through a few verses, shut up the book, and run away,—has he read the Word of God? He has insulted the divine testimony! True, he opened the book, he uttered to himself the words. Yet the service was no use in his life,—it was a mere formality. God will not be trifled with. Holy words will have no holy effect, if read in that manner.

Learn that religion is not to be a mere convenience. The ark is not to be used as a magical spell. Holy things are not to be run to in extremity, and set up in order that men who are in peril may be saved. The reasoning of the Israelites was subtle, but intensely selfish. "That it may save us." Why, that sounds like a modern expression! To be personally saved, to be delivered out of a pressing emergency or strait—that seems to be the mere object which many people have in view when identifying themselves with religious institutions, christian observances and fellowships. We shall never have a robust, imperial piety till we get out of all these little, personal, narrow considerations, and identify ourselves with the very life of God—the infinite love of his eternal heart. We are, verily, more or less all guilty of this very thing. We have done as long as possible without the ark. We have gone a-warfare at our own charges; we have defied the hosts of the alien in our own strength; and when we have been worsted, overthrown, and brought to the very brink of ruin, a lucky idea has seized us,—we have said, "Fetch the ark!" When the ark was brought, it was nothing but a wooden box: fetched by unworthy hands, its inspiration and glory ceased from it. "If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness." Men have lived lives of practical athiesm year after year; and when there has been a panic in the market, they have bethought themselves of old memories, early vows, first christian loves; and they have turned pious because there was a panic barking at them like a mad wolf,—they have begun to pray, and heaven sent back their voice unanswered, unblessed! We must not play with our religion. I will guarantee that this place of worship be filled at five o'clock in the morning and at twelve o'clock at night under given circumstances. Let there be a plague in the city—let men's hearts fail them for fear—let them feel that all that is material is insecure—that nothing is real but the invisible and the spiritual—and they will instantly attend churches and chapels by the thousand, and be very humble in the presence of God. Sirs, this will not do! God is not to be moved by incantations, by decent formalities, and external reverences. He will answer the continuous cry of the life. The man who prays without ceasing may ever count upon the interposition of God.

We learn that the Philistines took the ark of the covenant. But though they had captured the ark, that sacred shrine made itself terribly felt. The Philistines took the ark to Ashdod, and put it into the house of their god Dagon. You see there was a good deal of religiousness in these men. They took away the box out of the battlefield; they unlocked the door where they kept their pagan god, and put the box in beside him. They set the Right beside the Wrong. What a terrible night's work there was! "When they of Ashdod rose early in the morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord!" Well, that might be an accident. Perhaps in going into the house and moving the ark carelessly, they might have injured Dagon's position, and so he might have come down, as it were, by haphazard. So they set Dagon up again, made his position secure and respectable, and left him in his solitude. Next morning they came, and Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the

Lord ; and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold. A terrible night's work there was in this case ! What communion hath light with darkness ? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial ? When Right and Wrong come face to face, there must always be a terrible collision. When the Right goes down, as it does occasionally, it will be only as the ark of the Lord went down in the case before us, to plague its very captors and throw down the idol of their hearts. Would to God we could learn this doctrine,—that in some cases success is defeat ! We need to learn this lesson,—that in some cases victory is loss, and that gain stings the winner night and day.

Here I must ask young readers to consider this part of the story diligently. I know of nothing equal to it in modern writing for excitement, for that singular romantic element which always spell-binds you young readers. Read the history of the ark, I tell you again. The Philistines took the ark, but they wanted to get clear of it, if anybody would take it away. What ! you have won the ark,—keep it. They took it from place to place, and could make nothing of it ; it was a torment to them. Last of all they said, " Let us send a present along with it, and by all means get clear of it !" Aye, it will even be so with ill-gotten results ; with undeserved, unrighteously attained gain, be it wealth or influence, or what it may. It will not rest with the individual ; it will say, " Send me away !" Judas took the thirty pieces of silver, but they had become so hot in his hand as to boil his blood, and he said, " Take them away !" to them who bought him. But the buyers said, " No !" The bad man has a hard lot of it ; when he wants to get clear of his gain, and cries and begs that somebody will relieve him of his very victories. The Lord's sword is two-edged ; touch it where you like, it cuts clear away to the bone !

Learn that the false relation of things always brings torment. Be it in the family : if the heads of the house are disagreed concerning great spiritual truths and realities, there cannot be peace in the house. Be it in business : one partner is a righteous man, and another is careless about moral obligations. There cannot be peace ; there may be success, fine sharp practice, keen fencing, and methods of doing things that look very successful ; but there will be a stinging process, after all,—a sting that will pierce the heart and make it swell, and fill it with pain and anguish. You cannot rub right and wrong together, and make them cohere. It is so in a man's own heart. If half of the man is going one way and the other half wants to go the other way, the man's life is a most agonizing, distressing struggle. Everywhere this great law is written. If it had never been spoken by Jesus, it might have been spelled out by scholars in the world's school,—" Ye *cannot* serve God and Mammon."

The great spiritual application and the significance of the ark is undoubtedly Jesus Christ. We have no sacred chest ; we have no box covered with pure gold ; no tables of stone ; no manufactured seat of mercy. All the great spiritual significance and application of these

things we find in Christ. What the ark was to Israel, Jesus Christ is to the Church. In Jesus Christ we find law. Some christians find that a difficult lesson to learn. They speak of Jesus as being all love, gentleness, and compassion,—tenderness exceeding, and pity infinite. He was more than that. Whenever he spoke of law, he spoke of it as the lawgiver. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this law must be fulfilled." Jesus never trifled with equity, with righteousness, with probity, with moral obligation. Jesus Christ was not all mere sensibility. His was the sensibility that comes out of justice, righteousness, truth, purity, as well as tenderness, mercy, compassion. In Jesus Christ we find all the mercy of God! Will you observe that form of expression? I intend it to signify that nowhere else can you find an element of mercy that is wanting in the character and spirit of Jesus Christ. He is at the head of all things. As the ark was in the tabernacle, in the holy of holies, so He is the head over all things. He is highly exalted. All things were made by him, and for him; and without him was nothing made that is made. He was not made for creation; creation was made for him. The ark was not built for the tabernacle, but the tabernacle was built for the ark. All things are in Christ and for Christ. One day this will be seen. He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death; and in the resplendent universe there shall be everywhere life, immortality. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." When *he* is satisfied, who shall be discontented? When *he* says, "It is enough," who shall require any addition? When he who came up from unbeginning time—God the Son, lived and died, and rose again—suffered all Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Golgotha—when he shall say, "I am satisfied," who shall be able to able to suggest that one thing is wanting to complete the happiness of his redeemed family? My dear friend, *do not have the ark* to fetch from Shiloh; always have the ark with you. Don't let it be in the keeping of somebody else for twenty years, and then in the time of peril and perplexity, cry out for it. Have it always at hand. May our God be as he has promised to be, if we so will it by our prayer and love,—a God nigh at hand, and not far off!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thy presence overfloweth all things. All things are naked and open to Thine eyes. If we take the wings of the morning and flee unto the uttermost parts of the earth, behold, Thou art there! Thou art higher than all height, lower than all depth, and, behold, none can take the measure of the breadth of Thine infinitude. We come before Thee with a song of mercy and judgment; for whilst Thou art a terrible God—and it is a fearful thing to fall into Thy hands—Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works. Thou renewest our strength in compassion; Thou upholdest us by thy loving-kindness; and every day Thou dost vindicate Thy government to us, not by the greatness of Thy power, but by the tenderness and persuasiveness of Thy love. We have halted in the midst of wordly pursuits and ordinary engagements, that we might bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; that we might pour out our song of thankfulness, and renew our spiritual vigour by waiting patiently and lovingly upon God. May this morning hour refresh us exceedingly upon our earthly pilgrimage. May our strength be recovered; may our peace be augmented; may our hope be brightened; may our whole life be brought into truer harmony with Thine! Dry the tears of our sorrow. Be pitiful to us by reason of our manifold infirmities. Give to us all the fulness of redeeming love, and pardon our sin, for it is great. Wash us in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Whom Thou hast pardoned, do Thou also sanctify. To this end pour out upon us the gift of the Holy Ghost, that He may reign in our understanding, control our will, purify our affections, and bring our being into entire subjection to all Thy purposes. May there be nothing in us upon which Thou canst not look with appoval. Sanctify us in body, soul, and spirit. Abide with us; reign in our life; stablish Thy kingdom in our souls; put down every rival. Reign Thou whose right it is! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 13, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-NINTH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

THE PROFOUND INFLUENCE OF ONE LIFE.

"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."—1 Samuel, vii., 3.

SAMUEL is now in full office. Eli died when the messenger told him that the Philistines had taken the ark. Up to this time we have had no express communication from Samuel himself. From pregnant sentences, here and there, we have known that he has all the while been moving in the right direction. The Lord was with Samuel, and did not suffer any of his words to fall unto the ground. "All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." "And the Lord revealed himself unto Samuel in Shiloh." "And the word of Samuel came unto all Israel." These assurances indicate that Samuel, in his comparative obscurity, has been steadfastly moving onward according

to the purpose of God. From this time we shall see more of him. His position in this chapter is most conspicuous, and his deeds are most instructive. Verily, in this case, the child was "father to the man." As prophet of the Lord, Samuel's will was supreme;—all the main features of the history derive their expression from the *spirit* of Samuel. There is authority in his word, there is inspiration in his encouragement, there is death in his frown. Under these circumstances you see how naturally we are led this morning to meditate upon *the profound influence of one life.* Such is our subject. We shall develope it, as God may give us help, by reviewing the three remarkable attitudes in which we find Samuel in the course of this chapter.

In the first place, look at the *sublime attitude* which Samuel assumed in relation to the corruption of the faith. Samuel distinctly charged the house of Israel with having gone astray from the living God; solemnly, with the pathos of a godly tone, with the solemnity of a righteous, indignant, yet pitiful heart, he said, "You have been guilty of high crimes and misdemeanours against the God of heaven; you have trampled underfoot your convictions and your traditions. You have bowed yourselves before the altars of forbidden gods." Distinctly, without reservation, without anything that indicated timidity on his part, he laid this terrible indictment against the house of Israel. In doing so he assumed a sublime attitude. He stood before Israel as a representative of the God who had been insulted, dishonoured, abandoned. His was the only voice lifted up in the name of the true God. It is in such cases that men show what stuff they are made of. When they stand face to face with the crowd, and say, "You are wrong;" when they mount the popular whirlwind, and say, "Your will is moving in the wrong direction,—it is corrupt, debased, utterly foul, and bad!" Is there a grander spectacle anywhere on the earth than to see a lonely man confronting a whole house and entire nation, and upbraiding the whole company with a common apostacy—with a common determination to go down to darkness and death? Samuel said, "You must put away Baalim,"—a plural word, which stands for no god in particular, but for all the progeny of false gods. "You must put away Ashtaroth,"—a plural word which signifies no goddess in particular, but the whole company of feminine idols. "That is what you must do." I find sublimity in the attitude, imperial force in the tone. How did Samuel's influence come to be so profound upon this occasion? The instant answer is, Because his influence was *moral.* Moral influence goes to the heart of things. He who deals with moral questions deals with the life of the world. Any other influence addresses itself to affairs of the moment; all other influences are superficial and transitory. He who repronounces God's commandments, and tells to the heart of the world God's charges, wields a moral, and therefore a profound influence. Sometimes we say that a man's intellectual influence has been profound. There is a sense in which that is perfectly possible, and may be really and gloriously true. But the heart is further in the man than the intellect. He, therefore, who purifies the heart, brings the life up to the right altitude and inspires it with the right purpose, does a work to

which there is no end; it is abiding as God's eternity, lustrous in its degree as God's glory!

Herein is the supreme advantage of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ does not come to attend to any diseases that are merely cutaneous; the gospel of Jesus Christ does not engage to settle questions that lie merely on the surface of society; the gospel of Christ does not undertake our local politics, and things that are little, contracted, and perishing. The gospel of Christ lays his saving hand upon the human heart and says, "This is the sphere of my mission. I will affect all things that are superficial and local and temporary; but I shall affect them indirectly. By putting the life right I shall put the extremities right; by making the heart as it ought to be, the whole surface of nature shall become healthful and beautiful." This is the supreme advantage of the minister of the gospel. A true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has little or nothing to do, directly, with the little, petty, fussy controversies of the day. It is not his business to walk into heated committee rooms and to discuss, with all learning and profundity, your shabby parochial politics. The minister of Jesus Christ addresses man as man, and by moving the heart he moves the will; by enlightening the judgment, he elevates the life. Having done that interior, moral, everlasting work, there comes out of him, in all directions, the happiest influence in relation to things that are local and perishing. We shall fall from the great ministry, if, forgetting the universal, we give our strength to the particular. We need men in society who stand apart from the little fights, petty controversies, and angry contentions which seem to be part and parcel of daily life, and who shall speak great principles, breathe a heavenly influence, and bring to bear upon combatants of all kinds considerations which shall survive all their misunderstandings. Regard Samuel in this light, and you will see the sublimity of his attitude. He stands alone; on the other side of him is the whole house of Israel. It would be a much easier thing for him, viewed merely from the outside and in relation to the passing hour, to say, "We are all brethren; you have gone wrong, I must allow; but I don't think I should be harsh with you. Hail, fellows well met! let bygones be bygones, and from this day let us enjoy ourselves." But no man's will is merely personal when he speaks for God. Samuel would have no right to say, "I am setting up my little personal judgment and will against yours." He was the medium on which the infinite Heart broke into language, and through which the infinite purpose caused itself to be heard in all the indignation proper to its outrage, in all the pathos becoming the infinite compassion of God!

Herein, again, is the great influence of a moral teacher, a revealer of christian truth. Whenever I hear a preacher who speaks the right word, I hear God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; through his voice I hear the testimony of the angels unfallen; out of his words there comes the declaration of all that is bright, pure, true, wise, in the universe of God!

In the next place, look at the *holy attitude* which Samuel assumed in relation to the guilt of Israel. Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord." In the first instance

his attitude was sublime; the lonely man speaking the charge of God to an apostate nation. In this instance his attitude is holy. Because having charged the people in the name of God, condemned them in the interests of righteousness, and called them to purity of worship, he says, "If you will gather yourselves together I will pray for you." This is the secret of great influence: indignation—calmness,—righteousness incorruptible and inexorable,—devoutness that stoops to pray for the fallen, the foul, the evil-minded, and the debased. Samuel was not borne away by anger and fury; he did not give way even to judicial vengeance. In the first instance he describes the corruptness of the case, points out the right course, exhorts the people to take that course instantly, and then he speaks these healing words, "If ye will do these things and gather yourselves together to Mizpeh, I will pray unto the Lord for you." See the fulness of the meaning of such words as these, as used by such a man, under circumstances so distinctive and impressive! "I will pray unto the Lord for you." Then the highest man in the church is but a priest, a prophet, an agent, an instrument. Not, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and there I will pronounce the word of absolution for you." Samuel lays no claim to any position, so far as this case is concerned, but that of a suppliant who has influence with God. That is all we can do for one another,—the work of an instrument, the ministry of an agent. Did I say *all?* Did I pronounce the word *all* as if I were contemning its significance? Did I, in a moment of forgetfulness, say the word *all* as if it were but an empty monosyllable? Why, what is there more than that? To understand the the world's case,—to comprehend the terrible results of the world's apostacy,—to reproach, rebuke, and exhort in the name of God,—and then to gather the world we have branded with God's condemnation and pray for it unto the God of Heaven! When a man has done that he has exhausted his resources; he has done more—he has moved Omnipotence towards condescension and redemption!

"I will pray for you unto the Lord." Then the humun needs the divine. We never find—taking great breadths of history, ages and centuries—that the human has been able to exist alone, and to grow upward and onward in its atheism. We do find hours in which atheism seems to carry everything its own way. There are occasions in human history when God seems to be utterly deposed, when a whole nation has got up and out-voted God, emptied heaven, brought down the sky to the dust; but never lifted up the dust to the sky! Observe that such periods have been but occasional; they have always been transitory, and in proportion to the length of their duration has there afterwards gone up a cry to God, that he would come back again. If he would but once more show his face, the men who repudiated his existence and renounced his name "Would dash their idols at his feet, and call them gods no more." What is true in nations is true in individuals. Is there any man here who has not been living for God? You have not been living upward. You have been living; you have not changed your address; people have recognized your physical features; but you have not been going up in the quality of your being,—your pathos has not become tenderer, your charity has not become purer, your nobility has not enhanced itself.

It is a plain thing to say to a man's face, but I will say it, yet not I but the whole Triune God and all history,—when a man lives without religion—I will not say irreligiously, as if he were profane and blasphemous, in the ordinary sense of those terms—his life is a diminishing quantity; he goes down in the volume and quality of his being.

Israel was gathered together to Mizpeh. The Philistines, the enemies of the house of Israel, having heard that Israel had gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. Observe, Israel was gathered at a prayer meeting. That is a modern expression, I believe, and not much in favour with men who are "advanced." I don't know what they are "advanced" in, and perhaps it is better on the whole not to enquire. The Philistines went up against Israel congregated for a devotional purpose; and when the children of Israel heard it they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us." What became of the Philistines? The Philistines had won many victories; they had proved their prowess in arms as against the house of Israel; they had taken the ark of God when Israel resorted to the formal rather than to the spiritual. Now that Israel is getting its old heart back again, and its eyes are being turned to the heavens, what becomes of the Philistines? The Lord thundered that day upon the Philistines, and discomfitted them, and they were smitten before Israel.

"And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car."—11.

I find a great law here. To some minds this must, of course, be sentimental. To men who have seen prayer under certain aspects and circumstances,—who have known godly persons, hard driven in life, unable to conduct a successful struggle, and yet who have been praying all the time.—this must appear to be little better than mockery. But some of us have known precisely the same thing under a different class of circumstances leading to the same gracious and undeniable results. The Philistines came against a praying army. Not what the praying army did in the first instance, but what God did, must we consider. The Lord thundered, and the Philistines were deafened; the Lord touched the heads of the Philistinian army, and they went crazy; the Lord wielded his hand before the eyes of the Philistinian leaders, and they were blind! It is nothing to Him to save whether there be many or few.

In this case it does not appear from the text that he took the rod of his lightning and utterly discomfited the Philistines. He thundered! When God's voice rolls over human life, it is either a benediction of infinite peace or a malediction no human force can turn aside. Observe when it was that Samuel said he would pray for the house of Israel. The great lesson here turns upon a point of *time*. When Israel returned unto the Lord with all their heart; when Israel put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth; when Israel prepared the heart unto the Lord and was ready to serve him only; when Israel had done this part, then Samuel said, "I will pray for you unto the Lord."

Under other circumstances prayer would have been wasted breath. I find a great law here, which applies to the natural and the spiritual. Is there a plague in the city? Purify your sanitary arrangements, cleanse your drains, disinfect your channels, use everything that is at all likely to conduce to a good end,—then I will pray for you unto the Lord. After nature has exhausted herself, there may be something for the Lord to do, may there not? Who are we? Where did we obtain our education? Who put us up just one inch above the infinite that we might be able to say to God, "Now the people have done everything there is nothing for Thee to do." Who are we? A man ought to have a good many certificates, credentials, and testimonials before he is able to establish a status which will justify him in suggesting that when all *natural* processes have been exhausted, *God* cannot do anything. What if God should be just one iota wiser than we are? What if after we have exhausted the resources of our skill and the efforts of our strength, God might be able to say, "See, there is one more thing to be done." It would not be according very much to God, would it? Blessed are they who believe that after they have exhausted themselves, God can do exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think!

Sometimes worldly people say to us, very rashly indeed—observe, I only say sometimes—"Pray for us." Men have said that to me. What kind of men were they? Sometimes men who had made wrecks of themselves, who had gone as far devilward as they could get, whose hearts were like a den of unclean beasts, men who had no longer any grip of the world—the whole thing was slipping away from them—they have said to me, who would have been characterised twenty years before as a canting parson, "Pray for us." But one condition must be forthcoming on their part. There must be not only consciousness of loss, and consciousness that they can't fight God any longer, and that their next step will be into the jaws of the devil! There must be more than that. There must be self-renunciation, contrition, moral anguish, pain of the soul, repentance towards God. When these conditions are forthcoming, the servant of Christ may say, "I will pray for you unto the Lord."

In the third place, look at the *exalted attitude* which Samuel assumes in relation to his whole lifetime. You read in the fifteenth verse of this chapter, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." Think of being able to account for all the days of a whole human history! Think of being able to write your biography in one sentence! Think of being able to do without parentheses, footnotes, reservations, apologies, and self-vindications! When some of us attempt to write our lives, there is so much to say that is collateral and modifying in its effect,—so much which is to explain the central line. When we have written our biography, we have seen great blank spaces—we do not know what we did then; we have seen great black patches, and we have known that these indicated service of the devil; we have seen blurred, blotched pages, with erasures and interlineations, and we have said, "This reminds us of the daily and terrible mistakes of our life." So our book becomes an anomalous, contradictory, irreconcileable thing. Here is a man whose lifetime is gathered up in one sentence.

"Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." We have seen him in his childhood, we have had glances of him as he was passing up to his mature age. To-day we see him in three impressive and remarkable attitudes. His whole history is in this sentence: He was a judge of God all his days. Think of giving a whole life time to God. Some of us cannot do that now. But I see some young faces here, and this reminds me that you may be able to give twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty years *all* to Christ. Fifty years in succession; no break, no marring interruption,—half a century given to Christ! There are some old grey-haired men here. Perhaps some of them are not within the circle that is divine; some of them may not be numbered amongst the members of the redeemed family, and now all that you can give is just the fag-end of your life. Death can't be long in meeting you! Perhaps next year only,—perhaps to-morrow. The young *may* die, the old *must*. You may only have six weeks left; you had better give them than not give anything at all.

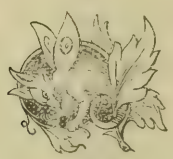
"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

There was a thief saved on the Cross, but only *one* thief.

See then the profound influence which may be exerted by *one life*. We are dealing with Samuel, and with Samuel alone. Samuel's life is not confined to himself; it is a radiating life, streaming out from itself and touching thousands of points in the social and national life of others. Who can tell what may be done by one man? I shall not quote the testimony of a friend on this point, because he might be partial in his judgment. But once an enemy gave explicit testimony upon this point, and we shall accept his words just as he himself gave them. His name was Demetrius; he was an idol maker; trade was slipping out of his fingers fast; he was not making so many gods as usual; and he spake to the people of the city in these words: "Ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul persuadeth and turneth away much people, saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands." It was a valuable testimony. It was an enemy writing the report of the church for the past year. It was the devil in Exeter Hall, reading a secretarial report of what one man had done. This Paul! Not ten thousand Pauls, not a great army of Pauls, but one little man, with an immeasurably great soul, was not only working mightily in Ephesus against idolatry, but throughout all Asia! What *one* life can do. Don't despise yourself; don't say, "My little influence is of no avail." Every man can be intense, though only few men can be extensive in influence. The father upon the house, the head of the business in his own establishment, the friend among his friends, the mother in the nursery,—each life can have a speciality of intensity in these high matters. Friend, wouldst thou wield profound, eternal influence? Help the *souls* of men; get away from things that are superficial, local and self-contained! Speak the truth of God, and eternity itself cannot exhaust the happy effect of thy blessed influence!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou settest up and Thou bringest down, as servants of Thy Church and ministers of Thy will, whom Thou pleasest, according to a counsel we cannot understand. Thou hast made the stone which the builders refused the head stone of the corner; Thou hast past over the wise and the mighty, the noble and the great, and Thou hast revealed Thy secret unto babes. Who can resist the call of the Lord? Who shall answer, but with all his love, the appeal and challenge of the Most High? Impress each of us with a deep sense of personal responsibility, which can be measured only by the gifts which Thou hast bestowed upon us and the opportunities with which Thou hast blessed us. May the servant entrusted with five talents, and the servant entrusted with but one, each do his Lord's will with simplicity, diligence, and all the homage of the soul! Save us from all uncharitableness in regard to one another; from all envy and malice; from all censoriousness and unfriendliness. May each esteem other better than himself; may the strong bear the infirmities of the weak; may the aged prophets be gentle and tender towards Thy young servants; and may those who are youthful in the Church of Christ have within them sense of veneration, confidence, and respect in regard to those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. Establish us all in the counsel and service of Christ. May we love the Saviour with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. May the supreme joy of our life be to uphold the rights of His crown and to explain the mystery of His Cross. Let Thy blessing now descend upon us, that we may have life more abundantly, that our peace may pass understanding, that our joy may be unspeakable and full of glory. Shed light where there is darkness. Send the delivering word to souls held in the captivity of the enemy. Turn those whose faces are turned away from the living God and the eternal light. This day may our hearts lift themselves up towards their Father in praise, in thankfulness, in hope! Amen.



The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 20, 1871.

(THE NINETIETH NOONDAY SERVICE.)

MAKING A KING.

"Make us a king to judge us like all the nations."—1 Samuel, viii., 5.

WE have seen Israel defeated, almost destroyed, in war with the Philistines. We have seen Israel in extremity, prostrate before Almighty God, and crying unto Him, in intolerable woe, for interposition in the time of torment and hopelessness. The prayer has been responded to, and Israel has been revived. A new hope has cheered the hearts of those who prayed unto the Lord of Heaven. In the revival of strength Israel has become political. A new idea has occurred to the leaders of the people, namely,—that a king should be required and should be set over Israel, that Israel might be like all other nations. That seems a very reasonable request, as viewed from a certain point. It becomes us, therefore, to look at it the more carefully; because, if so-called reasonable requests be followed by

the disasters which accrued upon the prayer before us, it becomes a matter of infinite moment that we should know the significance of the words we use and the full compass of the desires which we express. Truly this is a chapter of incident; the movement is rapid from beginning to end. Let us watch it; and let us gather together, so far as we may be able, the great principles with which this graphic chapter is so fully charged. The elders of Israel said unto Samuel, "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." The people of Israel, you observe, were extremely particular about the morality of other people. They had facts on their side. Samuel's sons did not walk in their father's ways, but turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment. When the elders of Israel saw this apostacy on the part of the sons of Samuel, they said, "Let us do away with this race of men altogether, and have a crowned head to reign over us, that we may be like the other nations of the earth." Let us then do full justice to the elders of Israel. As a matter of public notoriety, Samuel's sons were not like Samuel himself in their moral tone and in their moral example. This brings before us a sad and humiliating fact,—that the children of great men and of good men are not always worthy of their parentage. Few things can be more humiliating to a high nature, to a christian philanthropist, than to find that his public work is undone in the very circle within which his own influence ought to have been most intense; that he, who is instrumental in doing so much good abroad, should actually have to come home to find what sin is in its utmost keenness, in its intolerable bitterness. Sometimes public man may be to blame for this in some degree. They may have to say, "Other vineyards have I kept; my own vineyard I have not kept." They may be more fitted for public teaching and public stimulus than for private utterance of truth and domestic control of life. This ought to be carefully understood before we venture to pronounce judgment upon such men, who in their own hearts feel a greater bitterness than it would be possible for us by our mere reproaches to infuse into them. There are men who can speak to a thousand hearers, who are utterly weak and powerless when they come into the details of common life and have to teach a single child at home, and show the light of God upon the private paths of life. Others there may be who turn their public excitement into a temptation to go astray from plain, simple home duty. They have the ability; they are lacking in will. They can only show themselves upon public platforms, within great arenas of display; they are moved by public, rather than by intensely personal and moral considerations. Consequently, their own garden-wall is broken down, their own little flower-bed at home is all weed-grown, whilst they are busy with the great public fields and the great vineyards of the world. I would not speak harshly of such fathers: but if there be anything in these suggestions, and if anyone here should require a hint of the kind, tenderly, with self-restraint and brotherly forbearance, I would venture to say, Think of this; and, if you can improve, remember that now is the accepted time; you cannot too soon begin the work of family cultivation.

This brings before us the equally remarkable fact, that *grace is not hereditary*. When you see a good man you expect his children to be like himself. But grace does not descend in the family line. The father may be an apostle, the son may be a blasphemer. There are circumstances, I cannot doubt, in which at the very moment that the father has been preaching the gospel, his own son, whom he loved as his life, has been leading some profane engagement, has been blaspheming the name of the God of his fathers! This is very mysterious, inexpressibly painful, most disheartening to the man who wants to live a simple, godly, sincere, useful life. The fact is overbearing. I may now be addressing the son of a godly man. Your father's godliness will not save you; your father's godliness abused on your part, disregarded by you, will augment the wrath from which you shall one day suffer. It is one of many talents given to you; and to whom much has been given, from him shall much be expected. He that had the opportunity and the privilege, and abused what he had, shall be—it is the voice of justice, common-sense, and righteousness—beaten with many stripes. Why should it be thought a thing incredible, or why should it be a thing invested with tormenting mystery, that a child should not inherit the father's piety? It is precisely the same with intellectual gifts in many cases; it is the same with physical endowments in many instances. You will find, again and again, a great man, a man of wondrous compass of mind, great and manifold ability, whose son is of a very ordinary type of intellect. It is wonderful,—but there is no occasion why we should torture it into a mystery, and look at it as one of those things which should affright us from the religious or the devotional side of life. We have not to explain these things. We may pause before them and learn much from them; but the explanation is not with us at all.

It is important to gather all these things together in order that the case of the elders of Israel may be turned as much to their advantage as we possibly can. What my object is in thus defending them you will presently see. The elders of Israel had a case. They were concerned for the nation; they saw the two sons of Samuel going astray from their father's paths; they came to the man when he was old, and told him about the apostacy of his sons. They said, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations." If ever men apparently had a simple, straightforward, common-sense case, the elders of Israel had such a case in the chapter which is now before us. Samuel heard this statement, and the thing displeased him. No man likes to see his whole life disregarded, and his tower thrown away ruthlessly. Samuel was a man in advanced life, identified vitally with the religious and political fortunes of Israel; had his hopes with regard to the future; drew out of his own life the hopes by which he was animated. Now suddenly the elders of Israel say, "We wish to dispossess all who may be supposed to have any claim upon us through your agency and instrumentality; we wish to open a new political era in Israel." No man likes to see the tower of his life thrown down in that way. I have sympathy with old ministers who have old-world notions; who view with what appears to younger men an almost ungenerous suspicion and distrust what they call new-fangled notions and methods of doing things. After all, there is a good deal of human

nature and common-sense in the old man's view of the changes which are proposed to him. He started from a given point; he has worked along a certain line; a man cannot disinherit and dispossess himself of all his own learning, culture, traditions, and associations, and go back again or go forward into the infancy of new and startling movements. It would be well if some of us could learn this more profoundly. Young Englandism must be very distasteful to old Samuels, high priests, and venerable prophets. We shall show our strength by showing our moderation; we shall be most mighty when we are most yielding!

Samuel told the Lord about it. This is very startling to some of us who live miles and miles away from God. These old men seemed always to be living, as it were, next door to him, and had but to whisper and they were heard. These little sentences come in so abruptly. I read, "And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." Not, he ordered a great long ladder to be made in the course of the next seven years, that he might set it up against heaven, and creep up to it round by round. "And Samuel prayed unto the Lord." It is a kind of breathing process, it is ready, spontaneous as love. Samuel turned towards the elders of Israel, heard their story, then just turned his face about and told God concerning the whole thing. It is a wonderful kind of life,—God always so nigh at hand. Will he not be equally nigh at hand to-day? Has he still to be roared for as if he had hidden himself beyond the voice of the thunder, or is he nigh at hand so that a sigh can reach him, and a whisper can stir his omnipotence into beneficent interposition on behalf of his sorrowing, suffering people? Why, it would be a new life to us if we knew that God beset us behind and before, laid his hand upon us, and that not a throb of our heart escaped the ear of his love!

Samuel saw the outside of the case. Samuel saw, what we now call, the *fact* of the case; God saw the *truth* of it. Many persons do not distinguish between fact and truth. Why, there is all the difference in the world between fact and truth. Fact is the thing done, the thing visible, the thing that has shape, and that can be approached and touched. The truth underlies it. You must get at the truth before you can understand the fact itself. This is ever necessary, but specially needful where the case is complicated by profoundly *moral* considerations. The Lord explained the case to Samuel. He said, in effect, "Thou art quite mistaken; the matter is not as thou dost view it; looked at from thy point, the elders of Israel seem to have a very strong and excellent case. But Samuel, the elders of Israel have rejected *me*, they have not rejected thee. They are only making a tool of thee; thou art become to them a mere convenience, or as it were a scapegoat. They profess to be very deeply concerned about the moral apostacy of thy sons; they do not care one pin-point about it; but they are very glad to have that; they are extremely glad to be able to seize anything that will seem to give a good colouring to their case. Samuel, Israel has cast off its *God*. Is it wonderful, then, that Israel should cast off the servant?" What an explanation this is! how it goes to the root and core! how it cleaves open the life of man, and holds up in the sunny universe a corrupt soul, that all men may see it and know that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! What a subject opens upon us here! The

great world of excuses, social explanations, the faces which things are made to wear, the visors and disguises which are set upon life in order to conceal its corruption, its leprosy, its death. Truly the word of God is sharp and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword! It will not let a man alone; it will not allow a man to tell his own story, and go away as if he had exhausted the case. He is permitted to state the circumstances, to make his own advocacy of given questions, to put the question before society just as he pleases. But when he sits down, this word that searches the heart and goes through the life like a flaming fire says, "Now I will tell you what it is; you have made an excuse into a reason, you have lied, not unto me, but unto the Holy Ghost, unto God! Villain, your case looks well. I open thee now, I cleave through thee, I pour the sunlight through every fibre of thy leprous being, I brand thee liar and blasphemer!" It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

Here, for example, is an individual who has a most excellent case. He goes to his minister, and he says to him in a whine, which soft men may mistake for earnestness, "I really can't remain here any longer, sir. I have seen so much inconsistency in the members of the church, I have seen so much that has pained me, I have felt grieved at the inconsistency of professing christians; therefore, I am going to turn over a new page, and I must withdraw from the church." He was so pained! What that poor creature carried in the way of other people's immoralities, no arithmetic will ever calculate, no poetry will ever dream! When he has told his tale, and impressed the poor minister, who believes well of everybody in proportion as he does not know human nature, God says to him, "This is the case. That man would not care one farthing if all the church were to prove traitorous to-morrow; that man, who has suffered so much pain, who has been so troubled about the inconsistencies of professing christians, is now planning sin secretly in his soul; if I could show thee by taking off, fold after fold, thou wouldst see in his heart what he has never said to his wife or mother a child or friend; thou would see there a determination to enjoy sin under some disguise. He wants to get clear of moral restraint, of social disipline; he wants to evade public opinion, that he may, in concealment and under such defence as secrecy may set up, enjoy sin as he has never enjoyed it before. Mark him, going away yonder, bearing the inconsistencies and immoralities of other people! He is now going to carry out the very first step of his plan—to enjoy the works of iniquity, sources of forbidden pleasure as he never partook of them before." So there are two judgments in the world. Man makes out his own case, God comes with the explanation. Man cheats man with outside appearances; afterwards God holds the light over the case. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do!

Here is a minister of the gospel, who says he is going to withdraw from the ministry and retire into private life. He has been so annoyed by circumstances which have arisen around him; he has been so fretted and chafed by a multitude of things, that he can no longer endure them; and now he is going to enjoy the retirement of private life. That is his statement. What does it amount to? He is going to run away

because there are some difficulties in life. As if he ever could get into any sphere in this world where difficulty would not call upon him, and force its attention upon his reluctant soul! Has the man told all the case? has he not kept back part of the price? is he not rather arranging his circumstances so that he can sin with larger license,—that he can do things in private life which he dare not do under the responsibilities of a public position? Brethren, these words cut like daggers and search like fire! God forbid they should have any application to us!

The Lord told Samuel to make the people a king. "Hear them, do what they ask, hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." This is an instruction that we should do well to carry out in all life. There are times when we are pressed into certain courses; when all we can do is to protest. Sometimes when a man is weak then is he strong. The lifting, the half-lifting of a tremulous hand means—when interpreted by God's wisdom—battle, battle to the bloody end, protest, vehement opposition! It is a feeble sign; but the meaning of that poor, broken hand being lifted up is, that if the man could do that which is in his soul he would stem the torrent of the popular will and set up righteousness in the earth! The Lord instructed Samuel what to say. Listen to the speech which was made to the elders of Israel:—

"And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

What then? When they heard the speech they said, "Nay, but we will have a king over us." Observe how men can fight their way, when so determined, though all the warnings that even God can send. We should have supposed that the elders of Israel, in whose heads was lodged the wisdom of the people,—the men of sagacity, penetration, and self-control,—on hearing these words from the Lord's prophet would instantly have said, "Then do we repent of the sin of our request: God shall continue, if his mercy will so incline, to be our king for ever." Instead of that, they hear the warning, they see the thunderbolts, the whole future is depicted to them in words which have not two significations. As the result of the whole they lift up their voices and say, "We will have a king to reign over us." Do we condemn them? Do not be ready with reproach; do not be urgent in condemnation. We are doing a deadlier thing, it may be, than the elders of Israel did in this case. We are told that God is angry with the wicked every day; that the wicked shall be driven into hell and all the nations that forget God. We are told that the liar shall have his portion in the lake which burneth with

fire and brimstone, that no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of heaven, that anything that is unclean, defiled, or corrupt, shall not pass into the city of God's light; we are told that nothing remaineth for the sinner but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. All the terrors of the Lord are thundered from time to time upon the people. What is the result? Men can go immediately from hearing or reading the most terrific statements concerning the future of the wicked, and can throw themselves with unbridled license into all the diabolical enjoyments which stimulate but never satisfy the corrupt soul! By so much as you condemn Israel, you condemn the sinner. It may be that in pronouncing the elders of Israel foolish and criminal, you write yourselves worthy of the condemnation of God!

Observe, man *can* have his way. There is a point at which even God withdraws from the contest. "My spirit shall not always strive with men." If we be so minded—now let me publish this with a distinct, loud, clear voice that all souls may hear it and understand—we can force our way through all solemn warning, all pathetic entreaty, all earnest persuasiveness on the part of friend, wife, husband, teacher, preacher, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost! We can go to hell if we will! So don't be discouraged, you can get there! Don't be discouraged, there is nothing before you but love, grace, mercy, tenderness, God. That is all. There is a grim ghastly Cross,—hew it down! There is a way round it, a way through it, a way over it,—you can get there! Fool, coward! Not go to hell?

You see the childishness of the reasoning by which they supported their case. "That we," said the elders of Israel "may be like all the nations; may be like other people." Why, that is what the young man says when he is hard pressed. When he wishes to throw off family restraint, when he wishes to get away from family prayer, family reading of the Bible and domestic superintendence, he says, "I want to be as other men are; other young men of my age have this privilege and that privilege, and I just want to be like other men." That is very reasonable on your part. Is that all, my friend? Be true to thyself; don't tell lies to thyself. If thou hast lies to tell, why not tell them aloud—tell them to other people; why tell lies to thine own heart? To say it is only this I want, whereas thou knowest well, in thy heart of hearts, that it is some terrible wickedness to which thou wishest to give way.

Friends, in summing up this reading, let me say that where the *disease* is vital, the *remedy* must be vital too. Nothing will reach this kind of thing but the mediation of God the Son. It is not a speck of dust which any hand can rub off. The disease is in the heart, the poison is in the blood. The death—I speak, you may imagine, paradoxically, but with awful, grim terrible truth—the death is in the life. What will reach it? The blood of the Son of God, the agony of Gethsemane, the atonement of Calvary, the wondrous unspeakable, glorious work of Jesus Christ, Son of God, God the Son! Nothing else will reach it. Every other remedy is cutaneous, is transitory. The remedy of Christ's Cross, Christ's atonement, is vital, and is therefore eternal! I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say!

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Thy claim upon our worship is unceasing, for Thy mercy, like Thy majesty, endureth for ever. Thou dost never withhold Thine hand from giving good gifts unto Thy children. As Thou hast made them in Thine own image and likeness, and hast implanted within them desires which the world can never satisfy, so Thou dost specially reveal Thyself unto them day by day, appeasing their hunger with bread from heaven, and quenching their thirst with water our of the river of God. Oftentimes have we said concerning Thy Son, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But when we have tasted the bitterness of sin, and have been convinced of our own emptiness and helplessness, when heart and flesh have failed, when by the ministry of Thy Holy Spirit we have come to understand somewhat of thine own holiness and mercy and love, our hearts' desire has been that Jesus might sit upon the throne of our love, and rule our whole life; that he might be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, our Redeemer the Mighty One of Israel. We desire to live unto the glory of God, to understand the meaning of the gift of life with which we have been blessed. Thou hast entrusted us with solemn responsibilities; enable us to understand their meaning, to feel their pressure, and to respond with all our hearts to their demands. Let Thy blessing rest upon us whilst we are here this morning. May this house be unto us as the gate of heaven; may weary souls recover their strength and tone. May desponding hearts be revived and comforted with the consolation of God. May worldly minds be given to feel that there is a world higher than the present; that round about us is the great sea of Thine eternity! May we be prepared for all the future, having our hearts saved through the blood of Jesus Christ. We depend upon Thy Holy Spirit; we will not look unto our own resources except as they present themselves as the gifts of God. We will rely upon Thy power; we will cry mightily unto our God! Thou wilt hear us; Thou wilt redeem our souls from all fear; Thou wilt inspire us with immortal hope; Thou wilt clothe us with adequate power. Cleanse our hearts by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Show to us, more and more, the meaning of the mystery of his dear Cross. May we find all that is deepest and truest in our own life, symbolised in that Cross of Jesus. May it be the answer to our sin, the remedy of our diseases, the one hope of our wondering and anxious souls! Amen.

SPECIAL NOTE.

The Thursday Service will be suspended from July 27th until September 28th, 1871. *On the latter date the Service will be resumed.* During the suspension of the noonday services the weekly numbers of *The City Temple* will be issued as usual,—one penny each. The first number of the monthly Series (see advertisement on cover) will be ready on Thursday, September 28th.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, July 27, 1871.

(THE NINETY-FIRST NOONDAY SERVICE.)

JOY INDEPENDENT OF FIGS.

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."—Habakkuk, iii., 17, 18.

THE religious argument may be started from an external point. As, for example, from a fig tree, a vine, an olive, or a field. There is a theology that is natural; there is also a theology that is spiritual. Suppose you talk to a doubting or unbelieving man in the presence of a plant, you might put your case thus: "Look at this plant. How beautiful in form, in colour, how productive, how adapted to the necessities of man! Can you look at this plant and deny the power, the wisdom, the goodness of God?"

Suppose the observer to yield the argument thus far: "I cannot look at that plant without feeling that there must be a Creator, a Designer; I cannot look upon the wheat-fields, upon the gardens and meadows of the world, and observe the works of nature, without feeling at least that there must be something more than we see." That is the man's lesson in the alphabet. So long as you keep these things before him, you at all events trouble his infidelity, and you constrain him to make acknowledgments, though they be made with some reluctance. That is elementary. Keep him standing in the midst of the wheat-field, and he will be a deist at least. The christian comes to him and says, "I have a higher faith than yours. Although there be no fig tree, no olive, no wheat-field—though summer should forget to come—my faith will not be touched; I will still rejoice in the Lord and joy in the God of my salvation." You see the difference between the two men. The man with all these works of nature before him simply cannot, without convicting himself of the direst folly, deny that there must be something more than is seen. He cannot go much further than that. But, you see, his faith is dependent upon figs. Wither the wheat-field, and you wither his faith! He is but a natural theologian. Set fire to the earth, and you set fire to his faith,—you have made an end of him! But the christian thinker, christian observer, says, "I don't build my faith upon these things. Although there be no more of this natural beauty, not until God himself is dispossessed of his godhead shall my faith be impaired, shall my joy be diminished!" The man who says so may be mad. That is not the point at present. We shall return to that in a moment.

You may start the argument from the human body. Anything will do to start the religious argument from, if you have to deal with people who are yet in the alphabet, and can only read words of one syllable, and who know that. The great difficulty is this: Sometimes people who can only read a syllable at a time, and that with immense labour, imagine themselves quite refined readers. It is a great difficulty. There is no disease so difficult to cure as madness. Start the argument from the human body. Look at your constitution; inquire into your own physiology; see its complications, and yet its marvellous simplicity; how beautifully it is adapted to secure the end for which it is made. Can you look at the functions of your own body and yet doubt the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Supreme Being? Suppose the man to yield the argument again, and to talk in this way: "I confess that I myself, in my physical constitution, am the first argument in support of deism. When I come back to myself from my theorising and speculations, I myself stand between myself and the darkness of atheism. I allow that." Habakkuk comes to him and says, "You are reading the alphabet; you have got a very little way in the great literature of God's existence and providence. Though this body should pine away, wither, and hasten to the chambers of death, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. My dying hand shall lift the fragment of a blade; my last word shall be victory!" So long as a man stands before himself, looks at his own finger, any one faculty or function of his body, he is saved from atheism. But impair himself and you impair his faith. Alter,

if you can, his physiology, and you alter his theology along with it. Habakkuk says: "Man! my theology is not a question of physiology. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I am more than body: I find God in the depths of my subjective life." So, then, there are two classes of *faith*. The faith that reads the big letters of figs, vines, olives, fields, flocks, herds; the faith that sees beyond the letter into the living spirit, and that cannot be shaken with anything that is external.

I have said a man may be mad. There is a *madness* without which the world could not live; a species of enthusiasm, glowing life, without which the world would be poor, worthless. We need a man, here and there, to lead the world's singing. How many people there are who could not, for their lives, raise a tune, but who would not for a good deal refrain from joining the singing! You are not a leader; but you will have a hum in at least: and you are quite right. But the world needs leaders. Hence the psalmist rose amongst us this morning and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And our hearts went out after him,—not in his high key, not in his loud, clear, trumpet tones,—but our hearts went out after him. We said, "That is a right song; and if we cannot reach the lightning-notes, we shall still rumble and mutter among the thunder-bass!"

You have been at a great musical festival. You observed that there were two classes of singers,—the solo singers and the chorus performers. One man has stood out alone. Thousands of ears were opened to catch the tones of his voice; thousands of eyes were glistening upon him, in expectation of one of the grandest treats that can touch human sensibility, rouse human emotion, and turn human power to some blessed purpose. He was a solo singer. When he sits down, four thousand men will rise and repeat in thunder what he has spoken in the exquisiteness of his personal voice,—the same sentiment if not the same words,—maintain the tone by combination which he began in personal power. It is the same with the church; and that is where so many of us get wrong. A number of little fellows, with voices like halfpenny whistles, come out and say, "We sing a solo." And they *can't*. Are we then for ever to shut them up in silence? Nothing of the kind. We say, "Get back into the gallery; and when it is your turn, come and stand up, and be lost among the thousands, and still contribute your little tone, your little sigh, to the grand outburst."

So we need a man like David, a man like Habakkuk. Habakkuk, you see, expresses himself in the *first* person. Alas! there are some mightily fine people who object to the first person; who, unhappily, not having been consulted in the elaboration of the grammar of their mother-tongue, make a life-long protest against the first person,—always very humble people, only too humble! There is a humility that is very oppressive. I heard a person say, for example, "I delivered an address at the laying of a foundation-stone; and from beginning to end I never used the word *I*." To know that he never used it was to use it. The speech was, from beginning to end, one long *I*, and nothing else. We need men in the church who can speak personally. Habakkuk does not express himself in vague generalities. He does not say, "Although these divers disasters might occur, probably there would be somebody

in some remote nook of the world who still, after all, would maintain the truth and show the faith." But he says, and the responsibility is his, "Though all these failures should take place, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It is a solo. We cannot repeat it; but we can all take part in the great chorus which invokes the help, the pity, and the grace of God!

The prophet herein declares two things which are of supreme importance in the highest life of man. First he declares the possibility of having joy independently of all external things. When we hear Habakkuk express himself thus, the words which occur to us are these: "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not." Here is a man who has a secret,—a man who rises amid the pomp of nature, the productiveness of summer, and says, "Though every light be put out, and every root be withered, I have a joy that cannot be impaired." Men of that kind stimulate us; they excite enquiry—they turn our hearts into a new direction of thought, expectation, and purpose. If we can prove them to be fanatical, and their theology to be absurd, then we may recur to the old prose, the eternal insipidity of a tepid faith, of a diluted hope. It is a very delicate thing, however, to call one of the oldest men in the church a liar. What if, after all, Habakkuk should be right and we should be wrong? What if it be possible to attain a quality and scope of faith which shall save us from the dust and make us independent of all created things? It may be so. It may be that, after all, the Creator is greater than the creation; that they who are sheltering themselves under the little tent of the universe will one day find themselves destitute; and that they who hide their lives in the great love of God shall be serene, composed, triumphant, "amid the wreck of matter and the the crash of worlds." That is poetry! Aye; and life without poetry is life *minus* life. This is a very remarkable thing, that any one man could ever be found who could say from his heart, with the emphasis of personal conviction, "My joy does does not depend on the things that are outside me." I cannot say what Habbakuk says. I am not so old or so good a scholar as that hoary prophet. But we may be climbing up towards his great height. We cannot all be on the mountain top at the same time. Yonder he is on the far height,—he catches the first sunshine; here are some midway up; yonder are some poor travellers just beginning. What then? The one determining question is this: Is your face towards the rising of the sun? "Faint, yet pursuing." That is the condition which ought to be descriptive of every man whose life is an apparent failure, of every man who has a continual and anxious struggle.

A good many of us draw our joy from things that are *external*. Here is a man whose trade is remarkably good; whose fields are ripe unto the harvest; the sun and he seem to be in conspiracy; he seems but to have to utter a wish, and it is gratified; he is strong in body, never loses a night's rest, gets everything he wants. And he says, "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." But that is a poor theology, a poor faith. A man's income is doubled; and he says, "God is very good. I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." So he ought. But there is a possi-

bility beyond that, and it is to that further deeper possibility I want to get. A man goes out in the morning to see how his fields are getting on, and they are all covered with blight. He has only a few acres; he thinks he will try hay this year, because last year other people tried and had a good crop. He tries hay: the hay is a most beautiful crop, but just as he has cut it, or would have cut it, the rain descends, and he can't gather a spike of it. To be able then to say, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," that is faith! But who can attain to that great, exquisite, infinite refinement of trust? Yet this is what Habakkuk calls us to in these words. It is very well for you to go into your house where your children are all strong, healthy, and boisterous, full of life and vigour all the day long, and for you to praise God. But here is a man whose income is small; whose children are puny, weak, hardly ever have a day's health. For that man to look upon his lot and say, "It seems to be very hard: all these things are apparently against me, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." That is faith! In preaching this, have I attained it? No. But we want to be able to say with earnestness, though we count not ourselves to have attained, "this one thing we do; we press towards the mark." Lord increase our faith!

In the second place, the prophet declares that all his concern is about *salvation*. Not about secular prosperity. You know there is a law which says the greater includes the less. Habakkuk has followed the meaning of that law, and made an application of it to his own personal life and experience. "I will joy in the God of my salvation." Not in the God of providence only. Providence is the first; salvation is the second. Salvation includes providence. The body stands alone, and must be discussed alone. But he who is careful about his soul gathers up his whole life, and is master of the whole situation of his being, prospects, and destiny! What if we be gathering up the dust and allowing the king to pass by? What if we be very anxious about fig trees, vines, olives, wheat-fields, herds, and be inattentive to the hunger and thirst of the soul? Now this was Jesus Christ's method of living and method of teaching. Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He said the words "these things" allusively. He did not turn round and look at them; he waved his finger towards them, as men might indicate trifles. "First the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Having secured that gift you secure all blessings along with it. "Take no thought for the morrow." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal." This is Jesus Christ's teaching. He does not take you out into the fields and say, "Whenever you find the fig tree blossoming; whenever you find abundance of fruit in the vines; whenever the labour of the olive is a great success, and the fields are covered with meat; then gather yourselves and praise God for all the riches of his hand." He says, in effect, "Pay no attention to these things,—no primary attention to them. Your one great business is to know God, to love God, to seek to understand and to do his will; and as for all these things they shall be added unto you,—thrown in as a man might throw in some trifle to a merchantman

who had made great purchases of him." How keen some men are in the department of *providence*, how obtuse in the department of *salvation!* Some men are all body. It is one of two things, my brethren,—the body or the soul must be master. We take our tone either from the body or from the soul. The determining key of our life is secular or spiritual, external or internal. He who is careful about the greatest will of necessity include all that is least.

What are the points of application to us now that we are going out again into the world? How are we to carry this in our hearts and to use it for the benefit of our highest life? Understand that we are to endeavour to say something more than we find here, something with a sharper point, something with a keener emphasis. We are to struggle after the attainment which will enable us to say, "Although *my* fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Some of us can bear the failures of other people's fig trees with marvellous composure; we can look over the farmer's gate and say, "Ha! it is a bad year for farmers this, is it not?" But if the blight should come upon our little section of life, where are we? If the panic should touch our department, what of our faith and our joy then? We carry other people's troubles very easily. It is possible to say that though fig trees may not blossom our religion shall not be touched, simply because we have no investment in fig trees. Understand that? The great point is this: "Although *my* fig tree shall not blossom, although no fruit shall be in my vines, although the labour of my olive shall fail, and my fields yield no meat, and my flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in my stalls, though my fig tree be barked, though my one ewe lamb be taken away from me, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It does us good to speak in that high key sometimes, because it shows us that our education is yet far from completeness. We see how poor is their religion which is dependent upon the external. It is not a religion at all. It is a theory, it is a sentiment, it is a kind of natural instinct. But religion—deep, true, wise, tender—is not in it. We are to learn this great lesson: that he who has Christ has *all* things. My friend, hast thou found Christ? He was son of Mary, He was Son of God, He was God the Son; He lived died, rose again, to redeem thy life from destruction and crown thee with loving kindness and tender mercy. You will never understand this word salvation except in connection with the name of Christ. It cannot be understood grammatically, etymologically; it cannot be understood from any literary point at all. The word salvation is a heart-word: the interpretation of it is on yonder Cross—the Cross of Christ. You must learn it there, you must sound its depths there, you must try to find the measure of its infinite amplitude there, in the work of God the Son!

Do I speak to any unsaved man? I speak then in the *first* person. I will not seek words of circumlocution and mere courtesy to avoid the charge of egotism. I will say *I!* Referring to my own life and my own experience, I would say this to you:—Not until I knew Christ, felt his power in my heart, knew somewhat of the mystery of his sacri-

ficial blood, did I begin to live, did I know the first element of pure, glorious joy! Out of Christ you cannot have joy; you may have a kind of ecstacy, a kind of fanatical excitement, a momentary happiness; you may have bewilderment, confusion, delusion. But joy—wise, intelligent, rational, all-defying, all-surviving joy—you cannot have. Do you say you have heard that before? You speak it to your condemnation, not to my shame. Do you say you have heard every word of this again and again? I gather up the times in which you have heard it, and hurl back your reply as a bolt of judgment, as a fire of reproach and condemnation! To know these things and not to do them is to commit moral suicide! As for those of us who know the mystery of salvation—of hope and joy in a better life than this—it is incumbent upon us in our extremities, when trade is bad, when harvests fail, when things go wrong with us, when health becomes disease—a variety of disease—it is incumbent upon us, as professors of this faith, to show that in darkness we can be hopeful, in suffering we can be patient, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death we can avail ourselves of God's rod and staff!

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless Thee for all the children of Abraham, for all the inheritors of his faith. May our faith be as his was. May our trust in God be simple, deep, unchanging. Take charge of our whole love; keep our life in Thine own eternity; touch the springs of our being, that the streams of our life may be pure. May all our springs be in God, in the living God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Redeemer of the family of man. May we have no charge over ourselves, no care concerning our own life; may our present and our future be entirely under the control of our Sovereign Father, as revealed unto us in the person and mediation of Jesus Christ the Son. We thank Thee for every man who, in a loud, clear, sweet tone, has declared his faith in God before all men; for every one who has been simple in his testimony, who has convinced the world by the argument of a sober and solid life of faith in the Living One,—who has in Thy strength done all things wisely and well. Let this hour be holy to us! May every heart feel that it has alighted upon a flower in which there is much honey. May weary travellers know that there is a springing well here,—the well of the Lord's revelation which is never dry. May hungry hearts eat of the bread of life and be satisfied; may bruised reeds be protected; may no smoking flax be quenched; may the feeblest aspiration after the living God be answered by wondrous revelations of love to the waiting and eager heart. Give us release from the importunities of the world! Help our recollection to remember Thy goodness. Save our love from the distraction of many rivals. Draw all our faculties and powers, every desire of our soul, towards Thyself in profitable concentration, that in this holy house of worship we may become strengthened for all the engagements of life. May the strong man give thee his strength. May the wise man know that thou didst light the lamp of his understanding. Save the weak man from regarding his weakness as a temptation. Turn every eye to Thyself, thou Eternal Light, and bind around Thy heart all the affections of our own. God be gracious unto us! Show us a love deeper than our mother's—tenderer than we have ever seen. Gather us unto Thy great heart, and the storm shall never find us there! Amen.

SPECIAL NOTE.

The Thursday Service is suspended until September 28th, 1871. *On that date the Service will be resumed.* During the suspension of the Noonday Services the Weekly Numbers of *The City Temple* will be issued as usual,—one penny each. The first number of the Monthly Series (see advertisement on cover) will be ready on Thursday, September 28th.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Thursday Morning, May 25, 1871.

(THE EIGHTY-FIRST NOONDAY SERVICE.)

OCCASIONAL REST.

"Rest a while."—Mark, vi., 31.

IF there is one spot above another on which these words may be spoken with special appropriateness, I stand upon that spot at this moment. In the heart of the greatest city in the world, feeling the quivering of its all but incessant activity, surrounded by innumerable competitors for prizes of all sorts, there is a peculiar fitness in issuing the invitation, "Rest a while." All men are now in a hurry. Civility itself is cut down to a minimum. Slowness is a crime. A blunder is an almost inexcusable offence. Everywhere we hear the sharp, keen, brusque retort. There is no time for elaboration; everything must be done, and done instantly. This being the case, an invitation like that in the text sounds like the music of a better world; it comes soothingly upon the weary man; it is just what the heart has been aching for,—and how gladly he would accept it! The invitation

in all its completeness cannot be understood by those who have never known the pain of fatigue, the exhaustion of utter weariness. We get at some truths best through the body. At all events, we see the first rude outlines best from physical appearances and conditions, and what we call the realities that are round about us. This is an instance. It will be confessed by all men, even by the veriest slaves to their ever-driving ambition, that physical rest is sometimes needed. The aching limb asks for it; the hand that is so weary that it cannot any longer hold pen, or tool, or weapon of war, says, in its trembling weakness, "Let me rest a while;" and the fevered brain, over-driven, excited almost to madness, says, in its sleeplessness and throbbing and heat, "Let me rest a while." Well, then, here is so much gained. We shall be able to make our way from this low point to a much higher phase of rest, and find our way upward, from the cry of the feeble and exhausted flesh, to the greater, more solemn, and urgent wants of our over-excited spiritual nature; we shall understand, in some degree, that our highest, divinest faculties must occasionally pause, rest, and recover themselves, if they would fully, with completeness and perfectness, discharge all the duties and obligations which Almighty God has imposed upon them. Rest is as necessary as labour. He is not a philosopher, but a madman, who lights the candle of his life at both ends.

Let us look at this invitation, in the first place, *as given by Jesus Christ.* An invitation can only be understood in some cases by knowing the character of the inviter. Look at the circumstances of the case. The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught, and he said unto them, "Go ye yourselves apart unto a desert place and rest a while." Here is Jesus Christ, the *religious* teacher, the Redeemer of *souls,* taking an interest in men's aching, weary *flesh!* How foolish, then, are they who lock up religion in what they call the church, and don't allow it the full scope and benign play which Jesus Christ assigned it! Jesus Christ was a teacher of *spiritual* truths. Why then did he take an interest in men's weary *bodies?* Why did he not tell the men not to care for physical requirements and bodily necessities, but to go on again with their spiritual work? Because he was God the Son, the Son of *man,* the brother of every human creature! "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." Ought these little incidental illustrations of our Lord's divinity to be ignored? "Rest a while"! Why, it is a *mother's* word; she says to her little weary child who has toddled itself out of breath, "Rest a while." It is the word of a great, generous, noble-hearted leader of men. He says, "My company must have rest. I know I am sent to gain victories and conquests, and to work great programmes; but in the meantime my over-worked men must have *rest.*" It is a gentle word. Where do you find such gentleness as you find in Jesus Christ? Let us, in the first place, make it a question of simple human kindness, sympathy, attention to little things, care about men's hunger and thirst,—and where will you equal the Son of God? I question whether there be a mother who would not give up pursuit for the prize if Jesus Christ were her competitor. There is a more than motherliness, a more than sisterli-

ness, in his gentle care, his soothing sympathy, in relation to these things which are not generally counted under the term *religion.* I should like men, in view of this doctrine, to see that there is nothing in their whole life that Jesus Christ would not undertake for them if they would let him. He would make them happy in their affliction; he would support them in the time of their tottering weakness; he would take the vessel out of their hands and run to the well-head that he might bring them water! Yet there be men who think that Jesus Christ confines his ministry to things that are transcendental, sublime, far away, and inaccessible! This is a profound delusion. There is nothing about you that Jesus Christ does not take an interest in. When your pulse is feeble and staggering, he feels it in his own heart; when you are laid down in weakness, in exhaustion and pain, he looks in upon you long before the morning sun comes to pay his early visit; when there is little meal in the barrel and not much oil in the cruise, he knows about it and would provide for us. He lays down this doctrine, which ought to revolutionise society and bring men to considerations profound and pious: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He speaks about "these things" with a scornful accent, with an emphasis which means that they are not worthy of thinking about in comparison with the kingdom which includes all other empires—a monarchy which binds within its vast embrace all petty lordships, all transient dominions.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If he cared for men's bodies in the days of his earthly ministry, he cares for men's bodies now. To me, that dear brotherly, sisterly Christ of God is more God when He stoops to do such little things as are indicated in the text,—when He says, "You had better now go away out of the crowd, sit down a little, and rest a while." There is a sublimity in little things. As the sun can be reflected by a dew-drop, so the whole infinitude of God's power and wisdom may shine up out of the arrangements which God has made for the comfort, progress, discipline, and defence of his people. I should like to tarry long upon this point,—it seems to lay hold of one's heart: That there is nothing about us that Jesus Christ does not care for. To him there are no trifles. When a child falls down in the streets, why, rather than the child should perish there, he would arrest the stars and tell the world to stand still till he gathered it up! That is the kind of Christ we want; not a golden exhalation, evaporating constantly before us, shot through and through with light,—very beautiful to look at, but nothing to rest upon! We want the Christ that takes an interest in our daily bread, in our nightly sleep, in our occasional pain,—in our humanity in all its lower conditions, in all its more dependent circumstances and relationships. So, then, I am dwelling upon Jesus Christ's care of men's bodies, care about weary people, and I find in this case a practical application of all the religion that was in him. His religion was not a mere sentiment, a mere doctrine. It *was* a sentiment and it was a doctrine. But his religion had hands, strong yet gentle, far-reaching, all-including. There was nothing he would not stoop to do, if by doing so he could lift up his people and give clearer interpretations of his spirit and his truth.

Let us look at this invitation, in the second place, *as relating to spiritual work*. To whom did Jesus Christ address the words of the text? To the *apostles*, when they gathered themselves together unto him. What was the statement of those congregated apostles? "They told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." Activity and teaching,—service in relation to the human body, ministry in relation to the human mind. They had a double vocation; they had been faithful to the calling in both its aspects; and now they had come back to their Lord to tell him all things about it,—how they began and went on and concluded. They seemed to gather renewed inspiration and brighter hope as they related their christian report. Then these men were not what are termed the working classes? Yes, they were emphatically the working classes. There is a very great mistake made about work. The man who takes a spade at six o'clock in the morning, and works with it without breakfast, dinner, or tea, till six o'clock at night, is undoubtedly a working man. But there are men who work much harder than he works, who have no spades, and who hardly ever touch any kind of manual labour. I find no greater difficulty amongst so-called christian people than this,—to convince them that a man can *work* with his brain and heart. They will look at a man's hands, and say, "That man has not done much work in his time, or his hands would not be so white." A fool's philosophy! A man may work, and never take his hands out of his pockets; he may work, and have his hands gloved from morning till night. We must be a little clearer than some of us have been on these matters in relation to work. I do not say one word against the work that is implied by the stooping posture and the ever-exerted arms and legs of a man who is toiling for his daily bread. That is work, that is labour, and it must be appreciated and honoured as such. But the point immediately before us is,—That a man may work with his *brain* until his very life be wasted out of him, until he ache and throb and burn with such fever as hardly can be known by persons who never worked but with their physical limbs. The prime minister is a working man; the earnest student is a working man; the sincere, self-expending preacher of the gospel is a working man; the writer who never wields a heavier weapon than a pen, who writes for us day and night, is a working man. Thought takes the sap out of a man's life,—anxiety withers a man! He works who thinks deeply, who thinks until sleep flees away from him. Many a time the employer of labour is a more hard-working man than the person who receives from him weekly wages. Oftentimes a man with a black coat on is doing more, when he is apparently standing still and doing nothing, than the man who is clothed in fustian and works from one hour to another with the regularity of a hireling. But who can be persuaded that *spiritual* exercise is work, that intellectual activity is labour? A man will charge you a penny for so much *tape;* but if that man were to give you an *idea*, and say, "Now, I want a penny for that," you would smile at him, and say the thing was absurd and preposterous. Tape! Now, tape can be felt and looked at,—that is worth something. But an *idea*, a hint, a scheme, a fancy, a scintillation of genius, a suggestion,—to give anything for

that seems utterly absurd and preposterous. Yet its price may be far above rubies! I am afraid some people think so, and therefore don't attempt anything in the form of compensation. It is an awkward expression is that,—anything being "far above rubies;" because we may sometimes take refuge in exaggeration, and think that impossibility absolves from all attempts. I speak, therefore, a word inspiring, cheering, strengthening to you young men who have to burn the lamp far into the night,—to you men who have to think and scheme and plan in your business,—to you who apparently do nothing in the world, and yet do everything in your sphere, by the anxiety of your thinking, and by the constancy of your endeavour to arrange and plan so that all your thousand points may be brought together and focalised into an honourable success.

So Jesus Christ knows all the working of our *mind*, the extent of our *anxieties*, the wearing nature of our daily cares,—follows all the thoughts that tease, vex, annoy, perplex, and fever us. He knows us *altogether!* There is not a word on our tongue, there is not a thought in our heart, but lo! O Jesus, Son of man, Thou knowest it *altogether!* And, knowing it, has he left it unprovided for? See what he has done for the recruiting of man's physical strength, and then say if he who can be so careful about restoring the body would leave the recovery of the mind and soul altogether unprovided for. He has answered that every day and eventide. He sends a cooling shadow over the earth, and, as it wraps all things in its darkness, it seems to say, "Rest a while." See how above every week he has set that singing, shining Sabbath Day of his, to quiet men, to give them a moment's rest in the great strife and chase of life! If he has made an evening to each day,—a Sabbath to each week,—if he has in many ways shown an interest in men's bones, muscles, nerves, and sinews,—has he forgotten the immortal soul? has he made no answer to the cry of the heart when it is weary and sad, when it sighs for release and rest? His whole life is an answer to that enquiry. "Come unto me," said he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He meets us, therefore, at every point. He provides for the aching limb, and answers the sigh of the weary heart!

Let us look at this invitation, in the third place, *as limited as to time.* Rest *a while.* Jesus Christ does not say, "Give it up; think no more about it; draw final lines, and abandon the call of God which is in your hearts." He says, "Rest, but rest *a while.*" Rest is only rightly used when it is intended as a preparation for further service. Sunday is only truly queen of the week when it is used to acquire within its golden hours mastery over mammon and the world and daily care, and as a preparation to meet all those engagements, duties, and difficulties which shall press upon us on the coming morning. I am afraid that some of us have been resting "a while," and that the "until" has become a very long time. I am afraid that Jesus might come to some of us now, and say, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" It may be right to rest an hour; it may be immoral to rest two. It may be a religious duty to pause for one minute; it may be profanity in the face of God to make that minute an hour. There is morality in these

things: morality in holiday, morality in recreation, morality in sleep, morality in rest. Jesus does call us to holiday. He often says to us pilgrims, "Yonder is the green field, go and rest a while in it; toiling man, yonder is the sea coast, away you go for a week or a month!" He sends us on our tours of recreation. He is the God of the tourist as well as the God of the thinker and the praying saint. All things are within his kingdom. But when he sends us on an errand, or bids us pause, or tells us to do anything, we must observe the *limitation.* To exaggerate his word is to debase liberty into license, and to degrade righteousness into selfish indulgence.

What is the highest spiritual meaning of this, men and brethren? It means,—Our souls want rest. We know it. The doctrine meets with instant and universal confirmation from human experience. If I could get all my hearers who require the exhortation—blessed be God, many I believe do not—to pause until they became familiar with the truth that their souls need rest, I should have some hope of conducting their education to a high point. When you go to the scene of giddy, frivolous amusement, it is because your soul wants compromise, if not settlement,—wants a truce, if not final peace. When I see you trooping off to the theatre and the race-course and the place of doubtful amusement, I see something deeper than appears on the outside. Man's soul wants rest. There is something in man tormenting him, unsettling him, mocking him, whilst he shuts his eyes in sleep,—disappointing him when he looks into his hand for fulness. Yes, and more than that. Can I say it with sufficient seriousness and urgency? *It is possible to use religious excitement itself so as to abuse it.* It is possible to seek rest in mere religious excitement. Rest is not on the top, it is not on the outside. Rest is a question of the heart; of the relationship of that heart to the infinite, the eternal, the absolute, in right, in purity, in truth. Religion itself may be abused. Men may think that they have found *rest,* when they have only found excitement. They may mistake rapture for peace; they may mistake a momentary sensation for the deep eternal calm! This, then, is the doctrine: There is no rest but in Jesus Christ. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest. I will restore the balance of your nature; I will recover the just equipoise of all your faculties, impulses, desires, capabilities; I will give you centre; I will rectify your relationships; I will set all the forces of your being right, and develop them in the right direction." Rest, in its deepest and truest sense, is a question of *character.* "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The wicked are like the troubled sea,—never having a moment's quietude,—always sobbing uncontrollably, always being upheaved in distress and sorrow. "Great peace have they that love thy law." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace."

Peace is not a compromise with circumstances. It does not come out of an interlocution which runs after this fashion: "Let me alone, and I will let you alone; if you will be quiet, I will be quiet; let us pro-

claim a truce." Rest is not a *compromise*. It is a divine reality in the heart. Righteousness is rest,—holiness is peace,—rectitude with God, coming through trust in the atonement of God the Son, means tranquility deep and unchanging as the peace of God which passeth understanding! We have hints of that rest now. The great rest-time is ahead of us. "There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God." We enter into that rest now. It is not altogether a future blessing; we have it now, in earnest, in part. But the fulness thereof, what imagination can conceive? "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they shall *rest*." Not until we are settled in God's heaven prepared for us shall we know the meaning of rest.

"There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest;
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast!"

But, brethren, don't imagine that we shall not know the meaning of rest until we have entered heaven. A man's heaven begins on earth; he gets the dawning light here; he begins the sabbatic repose whilst yet in the flesh. So let no man deceive himself with vain hopes and delusive inferences,—hoping that he *may* be right, gathering that upon the whole he *may* be a child of God. There shall be wrought in every true man's heart such a conviction as the world can never impair,—such a peace which, whatever may be the foam upon the surface, shall have a depth tranquil, inaccessible by any furious wind, any screaming, battering storm! How is it with our *souls?* If we are not at rest, it is because we have not made things right with our Father. Jesus waits for us, bids us come,—would lure and draw us to Himself. He will give us rest now, and never take it back again!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou knowest our frame, Thou rememberest that it is but dust. We are a wind, which cometh for a little time and then passeth away. Thou hast put breath in our nostrils; there is none that hath life abiding in himself. In Thee we live and move and have our being. When our strength doth waste by the way, Thou callest upon us to wait upon God, that our strength may be renewed. If so be we tarry at Thine altar and wait with all child-like patience and trust at Thy gate, even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall utterly fall, but we shall renew our strength, we shall have resting upon us the very power of God. Thou knowest the anxiety of our life,

the cares which beset us, all the occupations which engross our attention and exhaust our energy. Thou knowest how oftentimes we are afflicted by the disappointments of a mocking world; how we are promised great things, and how the promises turn to nothingness; how we lean upon Egypt as upon a staff, and how it doth break and pierce the hand that trusted it. We rejoice in Thee, and above all things to be able to draw nigh unto the living God, to draw water out of the wells of salvation, to renew our strength in religious meditation and saintly worship! Now that we have gathered for one purpose, do Thou graciously meet us; lead us into the green pastures, conduct us by the still waters. We bless Thee for the Rock that is higher than we. We thank Thee for the shadow in the time of burning and heat and dazzling light. We flee unto Thee as a covert from the storm. Thou art our tower and strong defence, our shield and buckler, our song, our strength, our infinite sufficiency! We have done the things we ought not to have done. God be merciful unto us sinners! Visit us not in wrath. Speak to us with all the condescension of unutterable mercy, and gather us again. We have lost ourselves: do Thou light the house, sweep, and seek diligently until Thou dost find us! May our whole nature be brought back again to the fountain of life. May our peace be complete in the rest of God! Forgive our sins, because of the work of Jesus Christ. "Through this man has been preached unto us the forgiveness of sins." May we, having heard the joyful sound with the outward ear, hear it with the ear of the soul, and be glad under the spell of its music. May we know the meaning of the mystery of God's pardon extended to men who have forfeited their life and their destiny by reason of committing sin. Now be with us; give us some sense of the rest that abideth for weary pilgrims in Christ in the land that is afar off. Give us some hint of the unutterable peace which we shall enjoy when we have escaped this sphere of discipline and temptation and are set in our Father's house on high! To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be the kingdom and the power and glory, world without end! Amen.

SPECIAL NOTE.

The Thursday Service is suspended until September 28th, 1871. *On that date the Service will be resumed.* During the suspension of the Noonday Services the Weekly Numbers of *The City Temple* will be issued as usual,—one penny each. The first number of the Monthly Series (see advertisement on cover) will be ready on Thursday, September 28th.

ties ; Thou hast surrounded us with mercy upon mercy, countless and precious ! What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? Receive our thanksgiving, so far as words can express our gratitude, and cause us to feel the inexpressible thankfulness which never can be uttered in mortal speech,—the thankfulness of our whole heart, expressed in the consecration of our whole life. We are sinners. God be merciful unto us ! We come to the Saviour's Cross ; we look unto the Lamb of God ; we lay our hand upon the one Sacrifice. God be merciful unto us ! We cannot justify our ways before God. We have no reasons to set in order before Thee to vindicate our conduct wherein it has been contrary to Thy most holy word. We shut our mouth, we lay our hand upon it, we bow ourselves down into the dust. If we might say ought before Thee, we would say, Unclean, unclean ! But if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Undertake that work. Sanctify us, body, soul, and spirit. May our whole nature be pure. May every aspiration, affection, desire, be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. May our whole strength be an offering unto the Lord's service, accepted because offered on the Cross of the Lord Jesus. Thou hast added another week unto our years ; Thou hast taken another week from our life upon the earth. Help us to live in Christ, then our life cannot be measured by time. May our heart be in Christ's keeping. May our whole life be hidden with Christ in God, then eternity itself can never waste our energy or impair our perfect beauty. Come to us now according to our want. To the hunger of our soul do Thou apply the bread of heaven. To the burning, consuming thirst of our love and highest nature do Thou apply the water of the river of life. Revive the drooping. May they look up where they cannot stand up. May they feel Thy presence and submit to Thy rule. Dry the tears of our sorrow. Explain Thou to us, if so be we may thereby be stronger in the Lord and in the power of his might ; if not, help us to believe in the future, where there is no sorrow because no sin, where there is complete ever-enduring rest. Look upon Thy servants who have to face the world day by day,—whose life is often a battle, whose battle is often a failing strife, whose hearts are discouraged, and whose strength is wasted. Give them Thy grace, work in them Thy peace, and give them hope. Look upon Thy servants who seem to carry everything before them ; who speak, and it is done ; who command, and it stands fast ; who who dream themselves into success ; who put forth the finger, and carry all things as they will. This is a great temptation : who can bear it ? Our success endangers us, if our roots be not fixed in God, if our love and our faith be not established in Jesus Christ. Teach Thy servants that all this world can give is but a splendid nothing. Show them that if the whole world were at their feet it would ultimately fall away and leave them without possession and without rest. May we set our affections on things above. May we look at things not seen. May we dominate over time and sense, and even now sit down in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Bless all households and family circles. May heads of houses walk in their houses with a perfect heart. May all little children early give themselves of their own accord to Jesus the Son of God.

May masters rule gently. May servants serve faithfully. May the rich be humble, genial, liberal, noble, incapable of meanness, holding all selfishness in holy contempt. May the poor be delivered from all envy, jealousy, covetousness, discontent, and despair. May the whole world be touched by Thy light, and united in the one brotherhood which is found in the love of Christ. As for our native land, peace be within her borders! As for her palaces, wherein they represent righteousness, purity, equity, and progress towards heaven, bless their inmates and prosper their counsels. Break the rod of the tyrant. Upset the counsel of the fool. Break the teeth of the madman and take his power away. Reign Thou, whose right it is. Overturn, overturn, overturn, till everywhere kings shall be lost in the King and lords in the Lord, and there shall be one name and one love! Amen.

SPECIAL NOTE.

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The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Evening, May 7, 1871.

LIMITATIONS.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"
Matthew, vi. 27.

IT is well for men to think that there are some things which, with all their power, they cannot do. Some of these things are apparently very simple, yet even though simple and easy as in some cases they appear to be, cannot be done, even when men give the whole stress and pith of their minds to the attempt. This is implied in the phraseology of the text: Which of you by taking thought, by anxiously considering, by most perseveringly endeavouring, by straining his wit and strength to the very utmost, by spending his days and nights in the effort, can add one cubit unto his stature? There are some difficult things which we can do by putting out all our strength. There are others which mock the fulness of our power, and the tenacity of our patience. We resolve to do them, and we are beaten back, and taught a lesson of self-impotence which otherwise we never

could have learned. Can you add one cubit unto your stature? You may wear high-heeled boots, you may order the tallest hats, but the height of your stature you are utterly unable to increase. God himself sovereignly draws certain boundary lines. In some instances God allows us to a large extent to draw our own boundaries; in others he presently gives the final and decisive word, "Hitherto—no further." It is important to know the difference between quantities which are variable and quantities which are fixed. This knowledge may save us a great deal of trouble, and prevent very much pain. Can your teeth bite the rock? However hungry you are, is there strength in your jaw to bite the granite? Can your feet stand upon the flowing river? Can you lay your finger upon the lowest of all the stars that shine in heaven? A thousand such questions show that we are hemmed in by the impassable; we walk upon the edge of a gulf; and our mightiest endeavours show us that after all we are only beating ourselves against the bars of a great cage! A painted cage, but a cage still—a cage lamplit, but a cage still.

Now this limitation of our power must have some *meaning*. Jesus Christ makes use of it in illustrating not only the sovereignty but the goodness of God. He teaches us to trust the Father who has determined the height of our stature. He shows that if we cannot do such apparently little things as he has specified in his sermon, it is absurd to suppose we can do things which are infinitely greater; checks our anxiety by showing that our keenest solicitude about earthly concerns boots nothing when it gets beyond trust, and becomes practical atheism. This argument is as beautiful in its simplicity as it is universal in its application. Wherever there is a man, whatever his colour, language, age, he can understand this challenge, *Can you add one cubit unto your stature?* Why are you not taller? There seems to be room enough above you to admit of growth. Why don't you grow? You would not shut out the light of the sun even if you were half an inch taller! You would not imperil the stars if you did stand half a hair's breadth higher! Why do you not add to your stature? You can scheme, and arrange, and plot, and suggest. Sir! why not add to your stature? You *cannot*. Then consider,—ask yourself a few plain searching questions. See how God rules in all the things—in your height, in the bounds of your habitation, in all the limits which he has set to your life. And let the height of thy stature, the tinted grass, the colour of thy hair, the flight of birds, the time of the rising of the sun and the setting of the same, teach thee the first principles of natural theology. Learn thou that thy little power, expressing itself in ten thousand impotent spasms, is not the measure of God's sovereignty!

Now, the inquiry of the text serves to rebuke our anxiety and humble our impious ambition, by asking us questions which conduct us still further into the glory and the mystery of God's kingdom.

Which of us, by taking thought, can find out God? "The world by wisdom knew not God." The world dreamed, guessed, groped,—and the result was, an acknowledgement of the *Unknown*. The world in the fulness of its wisdom found its way to an unexplained Shadow, and there it stood, terrified by its own discovery, dumb through fear, skulk-

ing from a spectre which it never could brighten into a God. Which of you, by taking thought, can find out the Eternal, the infinite, the divine? Our Father is made known to us by revelation—he is self-revealed, self-portrayed. Why? That no flesh should glory in his presence. "Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world?" So long as men imagine that they can find out God by intellectual research they will be self-confident, they will be alienated from one another, they will be fear-ridden and superstitious. Only as they accept God's revelation of himself as a free, gracious gift, will they realise the common wants of human nature, and be moved to the utterance and enjoyment of a common worship.

Which of you by taking thought can direct his own life? This we have tried to do many a time, so we can speak with all the distinctness and emphasis of experience. "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." You cannot see through a single hour. When you have laid your plan, something will occur which you could not foresee. The road looks very clear, but who can tell what may be down in the hedgeside? You say, "This same shall comfort us." And lo! it is cut down with a stroke. You make an engagement for seven years, and the moment you have signed the bond you may be disabled by a mortal pain. You lay up for your children, and behold your store is blown away by an unexpected wind! Jesus Christ comes to us under these circumstances and says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" What is the value of your anxiety? What is the practical worth of all this consideration, all this fear, all this scheming and planning about eating and drinking and apparel? These inquiries seem to mock and torment us until, having riven open the wound, he pours in this oil, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." There are some things which your heavenly Father takes into his own hands. There are some keys which he never takes off his own girdle and puts into the possession of Cherub, Seraph, or man. What then? Seeing that you are beaten at every point, and thrown back helplessly in many of your endeavours, "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and as for these other things upon which you have been spending your most anxious fears, they shall be added unto you as if they were nothing,—given as a merchantman might give the child of his customer some little thing when he has concluded great bargains.

Which of you by taking thought can discover *a plan for redeeming and saving the soul?* Here also we have had experience. Self-destroyed, we thought we might be self-saved. We have gone to many a river and bathed in its waters of promise. We have hewn out unto ourselves cisterns. We have followed the wise man from place to place that we might listen to his theories, and consider his suggestions. No heretic ever wrote a book which we did not instantly buy and eagerly devour. We have endeavoured to colour our external life,—to give that life brightness of hue, healthiness of complexion. We have been casuistical in our reasoning; we have endeavoured to found a system of intuitive morals; we have consulted the light within us, and developed our consciousness to the very utmost, and still the sting pierces us! We have

gathered feathers and made a pillow for our weary, aching heads; and lo! no sleep has come to us,—no rest has eased our pain and recovered our power! This is a subject upon which we have expended thought. The mightiest minds among men have exercised themselves upon this very point. The world has set itself to get rid of God and of his Christ. Still there is unrest in our souls; there is bitterness in our chief joy. If you cannot add one cubit unto your stature, how can you *save the world?* If you cannot give yourself an inch extra height, how can you save human souls? Thus Christ rebukes us, challenges us, confounds us. Thus he gives us to feel that, after all, if there is not rest, peace, salvation in that blood-stained Cross of his, they are not elsewhere to be found! If the Cross won't do, nothing else will do. So our minds are put back; we are shown our littleness; our impotence is forced upon us, that we may start from that point in all our reasonings and all our service.

This great fact of the divine limitation of human power is to rule us in the deepest of our studies, and in the profoundest of our worship. If we lay hold of this truth, and have a clear, deep, tender conviction of it, and of all the truths which it represents, three great effects ought to be produced upon our life.

First: *It should foster the most loving and confident trust in the goodness of God.* There is a point where we cannot go one iota further, where we are compelled to one of two things,—reverent and intelligent trust, or the ostrich blindness which seems to proceed upon the principle that to shut the eyes is to escape all observation and all control. The course of reasoning in our minds ought to be this: "I cannot add one cubit unto my stature; God has determined my height." If he has been mindful of such a little thing as that, will he be unmindful of great things? If I find his signature upon single leaves, upon atoms, upon dew-drops, shall I not find his signature on the great forest? on the face of the universe? on the great ocean of creation? Is God confined to things that are little and trivial? Of what consequence is a man's height? Whether he be seven feet five or four is a matter of the smallest moment; yet if God has fixed that line, does his care of mankind terminate there? Is there nothing beyond? When he brings me to this point and says, "You cannot take one step further," yet there is a great future to be traversed, he implies that, since my power is exhausted, his hand is at my service. The appeal, then, is this—a tender, gracious, redeeming appeal—recovering our souls from despair, and establishing our hearts in trust. As God is Sovereign over things of apparently little consequence, he is as much King and Lord over all things of intrinsic importance, of infinite value. What have we, after all, to do with to-morrow? Yet that to-morrow seems the worst devil that some of us have to fight. It comes upon us and tempts us into atheism; it lures us away from simple childlike trust, and incites us to ambitious scheming, and the self-trust which is the worst phase of practical atheism. Jesus Christ would stand between us and that fatal to-morrow, and tell us that it is in the hands of God, and that which he does is best. If we think that we can do something towards securing to-morrow for ourselves, and provide against contingencies, Jesus Christ says that it is true up to

a given point, but beyond that point it is the worst of lies! If we still think we have somewhat of undeveloped power, he says, "You have not." "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Thou canst not make one hair white or black." And unless you begin your reasoning at that point, you will flounder in a thousand mistakes, and your worship will never reach the ear of God!

In the next place, this truth should *moderate our tone respecting opinions which are not decisively settled by revelation.* If a man can't increase his stature, how can he increase the volume of God's truth? If a man can't increase his stature, who gives him authority to speak where God has been silent? I believe in dogma, I believe confidently in positive truth, in clearly marked and defined lines. At the same time, I question every man's right or power to say positively that such and such a doctrine is true if he have not God's own word to confirm the testimony which he bears. This ought to make us very charitable towards one another. Alas! some men who could not, if it were to save their souls, add half an inch to their stature, stand up in the church and condemn thousands of their fellow-men, where God has given them no authority so to do. There is enough revealed in the holy book for our guidance; there is a sufficiency of revelation for any want of our life; and as to interpretation, there we must have the widest liberty, the tenderest of charity, the utmost mutual concession. Whoso claims infallibility, beyond uttering the plain letter and word of God's truth, sets himself up to be God, and commits the grossest blasphemy! I shall try to learn this lesson, and if any man come to me with a suggestion bearing upon some hitherto concealed phase of truth, I must receive it for consideration,—I must abstain from anathema, from harsh answers, from objurgatory declarations; for what know I but that out of a child's mouth he may have sent me some new message? But if I be required under pain and penalty to subscribe it, believe it and preach it, then I must have the most distinct declaration from the inspired volume itself that the proposition is true. For if a man cannot add one cubit unto his stature, we need not hesitate to say that it is beyond his power to write a supplement to God's book, and to say what God himself has left unsaid.

In the last place, this *truth should encourage us to cultivate with fuller patience and intenser zeal the powers which we know to be capable of expansion.* We see some things most sharply by contrast. Here we have a point which challenges contrast of the most practical and instructive kind. For example: You cannot add one cubit unto your stature, yet you can increase the volume and force of your mind. See the truthfulness of the doctrine we have laid down, that in some things God sharply gives the final line, in others he leaves great liberty, and calls men to growth that seems to have no end. See how apparently arbitrary is divine sovereignty in some of its workings. A man can't increase his height one inch, and yet I find nowhere a limit to intellectual supremacy and to the expansion of intellectual power. Your body has done growing, but your mind may just have began to look at the alphabet of truth. When the animal has reached the utmost limit of its capability, the intellectual, the divine may go on increasing, expanding, refining,

for God constantly says to the faithful servant, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Whatsoever a man's mind legitimately attains, God still says, "Come up higher."

Again, though you cannot add one cubit unto your stature, you may relieve the pain of a thousand hearts. See what a contrast is this. What little creatures we are in some particulars; how God crushes us, and stunts us, and says, "There, you cannot get an inch higher than that." Then he says to those creatures so stunted and imprisoned, "Now you may go out, round and round the world, carrying with you the morning of redemption, the day of mercy, the gifts of love." So little, and yet so great! A worm, yet almost a God,—dying, yet living for ever! Crushed before the moth, yet educated and sanctified until fit for the society of angels!

Again, though you cannot add one cubit unto your stature, you may cultivate an ever-deepening acquaintance with the will of God; you may know God more perfectly, read his word with a clearer eye, receive the suggestions and instructions of his holy spirit more lovingly, more loyally and trustfully, so that you may be men in understanding. Here again we have the little and the great,—man the prisoner, and man the free citizen of the universe; man limited, and man well-nigh as unlimited as God himself. So strange, so wondrous—may it be so instructive—are the contradictions of human life! So, I come with a rebuke to those who say that all their theology terminates upon the word "cannot." Understand there is a *can* as well as a *cannot*. Understand, that though there are limitations, there are yet great liberties; and that whilst on the one hand we are taught how little and impotent we are, on the other we are encouraged to study, prayer, growth, and expansion, until we recover the lost lineaments of our glorious Creator. Wise is the man who knows what he *can* do and what he *cannot*. The old law cannot be broken—namely, "Thou shalt," "thou shalt not;" thou canst, thou canst not. The old temptation still assails us, namely, to touch the forbidden tree. Yes, if men who have spent their strength on trying to do the impossible had expended it upon honest efforts to do the revealed will of God, society would be revolutionised in a day. But the old temptation appeals to us evermore. Some new charm is thrown over us from the forbidden tree; constantly some new offer lures us from the appointed path; we become faint by our imprisonment. Our ambition says, "Be bold and take a brave man's course." We follow the tempter, and God's spear smites us for the wicked trespass. Yet we cannot learn,—we will not learn. Where God has written upon the door "private," we go to that door and beat it, and importune God to open it. And where he has thrown open gates which disclose upon whole heavens of truth and beauty, we will not go in. We would rather increase our stature than save our souls!

What a poor account some of us will have to give at last! We shall sum up our life in this:—We have been trying to do the impossible. We heard that we could not add one cubit unto our stature, and the thing seemed so unreasonable that we determined to try it. We heard that we could not overstep certain

boundaries, and we have diligently endeavoured to cross them. That is what some men are doing—hammering away at the impossible! This is a difficulty that tells in many ways. A man sets his mind upon a certain course. If he can't go down there he wont go anywhere, not seeing that though that course is shut up to him a thousand other courses round about are inviting him by their charms and importuning him by their importance.

Let us go to them, then, knowing that we are limited in our little sphere; that there are marked and positive limitations in some cases; and that everywhere—excepting when we are growing up into the likeness of God—there is limitation. Let that rebuke human reason,—let that curb human selfishness,—let that stand by us when we read the holy word and try to solve its mysteries. And when we become weary of looking at our littleness, our experiments, and our impotence, and turn round in other directions, we find that we may take wings—strong, great, unwearying pinions—and fly away right up to the very heart and heaven of God! Though we be little we are great. Though we are shut up and confined and mocked in some directions, in other directions we are citizens of the universe, freemen of the whole creation. Blessed are they who know alike the limit and the liberty of human life!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, teach us that Thy fear casts out all other fear; that whosoever thinks of Thee thinks of all that is worthy of the powers with which Thou hast blessed him. Teach us that to dismiss God from our thoughts is to plunge our minds into darkness, and to lose all the beauty and joy and peace of life. We rejoice that Thou canst be thought about by mortal minds; that Thou art infinite, eternal, immutable. Yet Thou wilt dwell with the man whose heart is broken, whose spirit is contrite. Thou wilt not break the bruised reed, Thou wilt not quench the smoking flax. Thou givest power even to the faint, and to them that have no might Thou increasest strength. This is the condescension of God passing all understanding, meeting us in the abasement of our weakness and poverty, and supplying all our need out of His unsearchable riches. Even when our father and our mother forsake us Thou dost take us up. When we are a terror to ourselves Thou dost show us the way of recovery, Thou dost set up within us the standard of Thy salvation, and Thou redeemest with a great price. Thou renewest our

life by rekindling our hope. We come now that we may worship Thee with reverent hearts, with all thankfulness, with all love, with all trust. Accept our evening sacrifice and give us answers of peace. We would know Thee more perfectly ; we would distinctly see Thee everywhere in life ; we would know that the light of morning comes from God, that the shadows of the night are the gifts of Thy love, that all we behold on the right hand and on the left is a witness of Thy presence and Thy care. All nature conspires to elevate Thy name and pronounce Thy praise. When we read the holy book which Thou hast written for the instruction of mankind, we would see beyond the letter, we would commune with the spirit of the revelation which Thou hast granted. We would know Thee, not by the learning of the letter only, but by the higher scholarship of love, the keen penetration of sympathy. We would know Thee afar off, and interpret by our hearts when all mere utterance fails. Thus may Thy book be to us every day a new book, a continual revelation of Thy mind and purpose. May we read therein with ever-heightening joy, drawing water out of the wells of salvation, and find in the provisions of Thy word more than all our hunger can ever need. May Thy word dwell in us richly, as the answer to every difficulty, as the light of every dark hour, as the music of every lonely night, as the consolation of our sorrow and the deliverer of our souls,—so that we may have bread to eat which the world knoweth not of, and have consolations and power which the world can neither give nor take away. We would live deeply ; we would have roots. Our life would be a hidden life, far away from the gaze and the influence of things temporal and visible ! We would that our life might be hidden with Christ in God, so that all which men see may be beautiful with heavenly truth, lustrous with the purity of God, ever honourable, just, noble, and unimpeachable, because derived from daily communion with the Eternal and the True. Hear us when we confess our sins ! Hear the cry of those who are in sore distress by reason of intense consciousness of personal guilt ! Show the penitent the way to the Cross of Christ ! Say to those who are in despair, " Jesus Christ came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Help us to know the sinfulness of sin, and to hate iniquity as Thou dost hate it. May we abstain from the appearance of evil. When heart and flesh do fail, may we show, by the strength of our resolution, the tenderness of our heart, and the elevation of our speech, that Thou art our strength and portion. Strengthen every good man. Break the power of every evil mind. Uplift righteousness, virtue, truth, and mercy ; and destroy, as Thou only canst destroy, all evil, hypocrisy, chicanery, badness of every degree. Reign Thou, whose right it is, and establish Thy kingdom in all human hearts. Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Evening, June 4, 1871.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you."—St. Matthew, xv., 7.

THESE words call us to look at three points,—the first of which is the importance of *plain speaking* on all questions affecting the interests of truth. Jesus Christ was pre-eminently a plain speaker. He did not round his sentences for the purpose of smoothing his way. When he had occasion to administer rebuke or to point out the errors of those who were round about him, he spoke keenly, incisively, with powerful effect upon the mind and conscience of those who heard him. In his speech you will find many hard words, many sayings which would not be accounted courteous. He called men blind leaders, fools, vipers, whited sepulchres, and other names equally descriptive of moral deformity. He never appears to have used these names with hesitation or misgiving, but pronounced them as if

they were the right names and were rightly distributed to the parties who heard him speak. In the text he calls certain persons *hypocrites*. He does not say behind their backs that they were hypocrites, but he looked straight at them and right through them, and said, "Ye hypocrites." You will see, therefore, why I chose as my first point of address the importance of *plain speaking* upon all matters affecting truth and character. If we had more such plain speaking it would be a great advantage to us all. It must, however, be understood that as between man and man, where there is plain speaking on the one side there must be liberty of equal plainness on the other. Plain speaking must not be played at as a game of mere skill or chance; it must proceed upon distinct moral convictions, and come out of a sincere piety, a deep reverence for all that is holy, beautiful, good. Plain speaking, thus arising and thus applied, would become one of the most influential agents in the purification of our social intercourse. Many men speak plainly, but they speak their plain words so that the right individual may have no opportunity of hearing them. There are some men who are very courageous when the enemy is at least ten miles off. There are many persons who imagine that they have actually spoken plainly to the individuals who have been hypocritical and false when they have told their friends, in a semi-confidential tone, that they very *nearly* said so and so. It is in this way we play with our consciousness. We think that if we have very *nearly* said it, and told somebody else how nearly we did say it, that we have actually gone nine-tenths of the way of saying it and of defending righteousness and truth. We know very well when men speak to us hypocritically. Alas, what skill we have attained in withholding the word of condemnation under such circumstances! Were we courageous, were we equal to the occasion, we should soon put an end to a good deal of the common hypocrisy of the world.

Here is a man, for example, who tells a friend of mine that he did not think I preached sound doctrine. I am only supposing the case. On a certain occasion that same man comes to me and says, "Sir, I cannot thank you enough for that discourse; it did me a world of good." Meanwhile the third party has been to me and given me information of the adverse criticism. What is my duty? If I were a man in Christ I should say, "Thou hypocrite!" Yes, and the man would stagger and fall back. He would wonder what the matter was; he would think the foundations of the earth had begun to shake under his feet. I should put that man right, with his double face and his double tongue, if I could say to him, "Thou hypocrite! thou hast already pronounced adversely upon that discourse,—away!" Why, he would think, if he had the power of thought left, that a lightning-bolt had struck him, and it would be such a lesson to him as is rarely given in the schools of men. Were I so to say I should take the right course. Instead of that I begin to whine over him and to thank him, and to tell him how very encouraging his word is. Then I go home and say, "What a coward you are! You knew what the wretch had said behind your back: why did you not look straight at him and charge him with it?" That is the only way of clearing the air and putting things right.

Here is an individual with whom, let me again suppose, I have certain important relations. He and I have to meet upon some very difficult and delicate business on the Sabbath Day,—business affecting the sanctuary and the advancement of Christ's kingdom amongst men. He knows that the business is of a very critical kind; that it will load him, more or less, with responsibility, and call him to the discharge of certain duties which are certainly not pleasing in themselves. The man, by some curious combination of events which I shall not further describe, feels "not very well" on Saturday evening, gets worse towards bedtime, and is unable to come out on the Sunday. But he is at work by nine o'clock on Monday morning, having most mysteriously and providentially revived! He meets me during the week and says, "I am very sorry I could not be with you on Sunday, but really I felt anything but well." Were I man I should say to him, "Thou hypocrite! away with thee!" And then what would the man do? *He would give up his seat!* Men do not like plain speaking. It is a mercy for many seat-holders that Jesus Christ is not upon the earth now; and a very blessed providence to many preachers and teachers that they have not to talk over many of their lessons face to face with their Master when their work is done every night. They have to do so by and by. But they put their confidence in some delusion that, somehow or other, they will escape at last. This is the difficulty:—There is not a man here who who would not applaud sincerity as much as I should; yet when we come to apply sincerity, we all quail before it and protest against it. It is so in the exposition of divine truth. I may stand here, and say in general terms to all the world, "You are sinners before God," and I should be declared to be laying down sound doctrine. But if I lay my hand upon any *one* man and say, "You are a bad man," you will say I have offended him and been rude to him. We can sit and hear the *world* condemned and sentenced to be hanged; but when all this generality is narrowed down to a personal application—without which application the doctrine is simply sounding brass—we begin to complain that we have been rudely treated. We grow more and more away from the candour which underlies and beautifies all truly sincere speech. We begin in childhood with wonderful candour, beautiful simplicity of intercourse, and we grow away from that into conventionality and artificialism; and he is the clever man who can best conceal himself. A lady was talking some time ago, and in the course of her speech she said that a friend of hers had very much injured his *h*eye. A little boy heard her, and looking at her most seriously he said, "You should not say *h*eye; you should say eye." Ten years after that the little boy will never think of telling a person who falsely uses the aspirate of such a fault as that; he will feel quite shame-faced when anybody tells him that once he spoke so to a lady. But will he be a better man for it? What will he do twenty years after? He will then go to some little secret company and say, "I heard so and so yesterday, and she called the eye a *h*eye," and they will all laugh over it. And that will be called courtesy and self-restraint and propriety! No. The little boy was in the right of it. If people would speak thus plainly—being willing, observe, to be spoken to again with equal plainness, and that, too, in a

right spirit—there would be a good deal of practical schoolmastering done in the world. Jesus Christ always spoke plainly. He never went behind people's backs to tell them of their moral mispronunciations and and their moral deceitfulness. He spoke all that was in his heart concerning those wickednesses to the people themselves, and thus he often got himself to be misunderstood and ill-treated. The disciples came to him and said, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" People have come to me with the self-same thing, and I have been coward enough to regret my plainness of speech. If I have spoken shiveringly, directly to a man, and have heard afterwards that he was "offended," I have blamed myself. I have a right to blame myself if the speech came out of an evil spirit, but in so far as it was spoken with the dignity of truth and the consciousness of innocence it ought not to have occasioned even a momentary pang of self-reproach.

Society would be much improved by the infusion of Christian sincerity into its speech. We tell lies, we write lies, and we act lies. The post will not go away to-morrow that will not probably convey a false impression to the most of people who receive our communications. We tell people we are glad to see them, when we are exceedingly sorry. We say we shall be most happy to do so and so, when all the time in our hearts we are regretting that ever we were asked to do anything of the kind. It is at this point that our christian profession should come upon us with accusing force, reproaching us, and exciting our conscience to the highest point of retribution. I can imagine some hearers, being misdirected by this kind of exposition, taking the liberty to speak plainly to other people, forgetting that they themselves are to take in their turn when needful equal plainness of speech.

Two things are required in the plain speaker. *Personal rightness.* "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." We have nothing to do with the hypocrisies which may exist between other people, except in so far as we know them personally; but when hypocrisy is practised upon ourselves, then the scathing word of truth may be spoken. More, however, than personal rightness is needed: there must also be *moral fearlessness.* Our courage is not always equal to our convictions. We know the right, and yet dare not pursue it. The right word suggests itself to our lips, and our lips dare not pronounce it. What manner of persons ought we to be who profess Christ? We are not discussing common laws of social courtesy and common intercourse. We are now asking ourselves in Christ's presence, and in the presence of his great Cross, what ought to be our sincerity, transparency, reality, as the bearers of his gracious name? If *we* dabble in immoral excuses, if *we* shuffle and dodge and stoop and wriggle, what can we expect of men who profess nothing higher than common courtesy and common conventional relationship as between man and man? Yet this is a most difficult point to carry into practice, because we may show a hypocritical love of the right; our very plainness of speech may come out of a subtle hypocrisy; and we may think to get ourselves reputation for honesty by speaking coarsely to other people. It is no easy matter this, and nothing can help us to do it with dignity and tenderness and self-

distrust, with modesty and trembling, and yet with emphasis, but the indwelling, all-sanctifying Holy Ghost!

The second point to which the text calls our attention is the *far-seeing spirit of prophecy*. Jesus Christ said to the men of his day, "Esaias prophesied of you." *Esaias* prophesied hundreds of years before they lived. Jesus Christ says to the men of his day, "Esaias had *you* in his eye." Observe the unity of the moral world; observe the unchangeableness of God's laws; see how right is ever right and wrong is ever wrong; how the centuries make no difference in the quality of righteousness, and fail to work any improvement in the deformity of evil. If any man would see himself as he really is, let him look into the mirror of holy scripture. God's book never gets out of date, because it deals with eternal principles and covers the necessities of all mankind. Let us then study the word of God more closely. No man can truly know human nature, who does not read *two* Bibles,—namely, the Bible of God as written in the holy scriptures, and the Bible of God as written in his own heart and conscience. Human nature was never so expounded as it is expounded in holy writ. No man ever comes to this book without feeling that his particular case—in all the minuteness of its detail, in all the subtlety of its mystery—has been dealt with by the holy writers. We praise other books because of the knowledge of human nature which they display, and we are right in making them one standard of our admiration and applause. We delight in a writer's power of analysing human nature, human feeling, human conduct. We say, "He knows human nature thoroughly." Therefore such writers get hold of us and carry us away captive, and rightly so. If that be a true standard of judgment at all, I bind men who have not lost all candour and all simplicity to look at the Bible in the light of their own standard. The Bible exposes the very innermost recesses of human nature; sets a light where no other hand ever placed a candle; lights up the pathways of our most secret life and thought; and we begin to feel that the first book we must shut up when we are going to do evil is *God's* Book. This is the great hold, the sovereign mastery, which the Book of God has over the ages,—that it knows us, that it gives articulation to our dumb reproaches, that it puts into the best words the things which we reap against ourselves and cannot fully explain. Esaias knew us; Jeremiah has analysed and dissected and anatomised us. If any man would know the human heart, he must read the human heart in God's Book.

The third point to which we are called in these words is the *high authority of the righteous censor*. When Jesus Christ spoke in this case he did not speak altogether in his own name. He used the name of Esaias. All time is on the side of the righteous man; all history puts weapons into the hands of the man who would be valiant for truth. The righteous man does not draw his authority from yesterday. The credentials of the righteous man are not written with ink that is hardly dry yet. It draws from all the Past. A good man does not stand alone in his good works. The man who comes to teach truth brings a great multitude with him. The glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the goodly fellowship of the prophets! We are

little in ourselves, in our individuality; looked at in our simple personality, we are not worthy of a moment's consideration. But the man who lifts up his voice for truth and right speaks with the sound of mighty thunderings and the impressiveness of many waters. Believe this, you young preachers of the gospel. It is not your little bit of paper that you are depending upon as your authority when you enter into the pulpit. Believe this, teachers of the young,—believe this, parents, in your family education,—business men, in your commercial relations,—honourable souls of all kinds:—When you speak a right word, the *prophets* speak through you, the *apostles* prolong the strain, and the *grand old martyrs* seal it with their blood! Thus the tiniest instrument in God's hand becomes a match for walled cities and fortressed hosts and men who set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed. You are poor in number now, meagre in agency; but they that are for you are more than they that are against you. You seem to be alone, but you are not alone. Esaias is looking over your shoulder; Jeremiah is saying, "Be emphatic;" martyrs are crying, "Play the man for truth;" all history says, "Don't fail: this is a crisis; the right word now is a battle won." Speak it! "Be thou like the heroic Paul; if thou hast a truth to utter, speak it boldly, speak it all!"

The men whom Jesus Christ condemned were outwardly very good looking man. For example, they were very technical. They said, "The disciples do not wash their hands; this is a very sad business, and must be enquired into." They were very particular in saying how often it was to be done, which hand was to be uppermost, and how the evolution was to proceed. They were also a very critical set of men; they criticised the disciples. They were not shame-faced about their technicality; they went right up to the Master and said, "How is this?" There was courage in the men. They had a complaint, and they spoke it out clearly. Then they had great reverence; strong veneration for traditional practices, traditional customs. They did not like the Past to be altogether ignored and dishonoured; they spoke in the name of the elders. So the men were not altogether bad, you observe. They were technical, they were critical, they were traditional. Jesus turned upon them this bolt of thunder, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" They never caught Jesus Christ unawares. He never had to ask for time to go home and find a suitable weapon, and then for additional time to whet its edge. He was clothed with the whole armour of God. Touch him anywhere, and his answer was instantaneous and complete. So with us, my brethren. We may be technical. We may like to see the order of divine service pursued in a certain way,—first singing, then reading, then praying, then singing, then preaching. Yes, we are strong upon these points. But what if we can go home and do a sneaking action? We may be critical. We may say the preacher's grammar was not very exact; the singing was not what we call scientific,—there was a good deal of flatness and a good deal of discrepancy in the way in which the psalmody was conducted. Up to that point we are the noblest men on the face of the earth. But what if to-morrow morning we oppress the hireling

and lay a heavy hand on the weak? We are fond of traditions. We like to talk about that "dear old minister" that died about fifty years ago; and that "nice old christian friend" that used to do no end of beautiful things, who died about a quarter of a century since,—we like to sit where he sat and to do what he did. We have a great reverence for these men and their ways of doing things. But what if to-morrow morning we speak a savage word to a lonely creature, and drive into despair some soul that would be thankful for one ray of light? Away with our technicality and criticism and tradition, if we are not sound at the core, right and true to great principles! Let us beware least we strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Then what is to be our help in all this matter of reality? Sincerity. Jesus Christ must be the help of our souls. He who spoke plainly must teach us to speak plainly; he who set the example must give us strength. And he will do it. We are not to speak as if we ourselves were infallible, and other people were poor guilty sinners. We are not to take upon us any air that savours of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction. When we speak plainly we are to speak tenderly. "Consider thyself, least thou also be tempted." We are not to treat all men alike; we are to discriminate; we are to make a difference. On some we are to have compassion; to some men we are to speak as the lightning would speak, if it could open its lips, in the name of God; to others we are to speak as the dew would speak, could it tell all that is in its pure heart. We are to argue with some men with sternness of tone, and we are to speak to others with heart-breaking pathos. Tears are to be the secret of our power; forbearance is to be our secret of influence; and moderation is to do what exaggeration could never accomplish. We thus need a wise and understanding heart to know what to say, and especially to know *how* to say it, because we may ruin our cause by a tone!

What are we to do then? We are to study Jesus Christ. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." We are to copy his example, not only in its dignity and power and lustre, but in its condescension, humility, gentleness, tearfulness, and infinite kindness. There is a way of administering reproach which misses its very object; there is a way of speaking the right word which turns it, for all practical purposes, into the wrong word. So, then, it must be to Christ we come, and in Christ's school we study. Lord help us to speak from the height of thy Cross! Knowing the mystery of love in thy love, may our lips say the right word in the right way, and thus save souls from death and turn many to righteousness!

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless Thee for Jesus Christ as a teacher sent from heaven. His words are words of life and power; they search the heart, they try the reins, of the children of men; they are sharper than a two-edged sword. We rejoice that Thou dost enable us to submit ourselves to the searching criticism of Jesus Christ's word. We have been false to ourselves; we have concealed our true nature even from our own eyes; we have looked on the outside only; we have forgotten our inner life, the life of motive, of secret impulse, of purposes we dare not explain; we have looked only to our hand, when we ought to have examined the very life of our heart. But Jesus Christ, Thy Son, doth not spare us; He searcheth us as with a candle; He kindleth upon us the flame of the Lord, and in the light of that fire he searches and tries us, and sees if there be any wicked way in us. We rejoice in the plainness and the vigour of His speech. We thank Thee that Jesus Christ layeth the axe at the root of the tree; we bless Thee for his radical teaching, for his going to the roots of all evil things, for his making the tree good that the fruit may be good, for his purifying the fountain that the stream may be pure. May we learn of Jesus Christ in these things, and seek to do Thy will, not as man-pleasers, not with eye-service, but with all the simplicity of love, with all the strength of entire trust, honouring goodness for its own sake, and loving truth because it is the speech of God! Deliver us from all deceitfulness, all falsehood, all pretence, and enable us to serve Thee in spirit and in truth; and out of a life based on godly sincerity, may there come works of love, pity, charity, and beneficence which shall bless all with whom we come in contact! Have mercy upon us wherein we have sinned. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done. We accuse ourselves. If the surface has been right the motive has been wrong; if our hand has been clean our heart has been leprous. Do Thou wash us in the blood of Jesus Christ, shed for the sins of men,—the sacrificial blood which is our propitiation, our plea, and our answer before God! Let Thine own people glory in the the truth, feel its power, acknowledge its sovereignty, bless its giver. If there be before Thee, or shall come within the influence of our word to-night, any man who is hypocritical, who seeks to cover up his real state from the eye of society and from the eye of his own conscience, apply Thy word to such as a flame of fire, finding its way into the secret chambers of the soul and lighting up the darkest recesses of the life. Make us glad in the Lord! In the world we have mortification, disappointment, tears, broken staves piercing our hands, much sorrow, great difficulty. But in God's house, on God's day, gathered as we are around God's book, surely Thy children shall not plead in vain for the gladness which comes of Thy presence! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, June 11, 1871.

Expository Readings in the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER I.

6. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

LAST interviews are notably pathetic. The conversation which is now before us took place just as Jesus Christ was about to leave his disciples upon the earth. We cannot but have felt—if our reading of the gospel has been at all intelligent and continuous—a keen interest in the enquiry, How will Jesus Christ make an end of his earthly fellowship? He has come into the world in an unprecedented manner: how will he go *out* of it? He has

surrounded himself by very strange and complicated combinations: how will he extricate himself and get away from all the entanglement of his present life? He came in by a door which had never been known to any other man who had come to teach the world: what door is there by which he can go out? There is a sublime answer to that enquiry, and no fancy could ever have dreamed it. *He ascended!* Your familiarity with that expression may have taken away somewhat of your sense of its sublimity; but try to conceive a more sublime answer! We must have simplicity, completeness, sufficiency, to cover all the requirements of the case. I find every element in the one reply: *He ascended!* Not he struggled and panted, he strove, he made a great and terrible effort at last, and in the midst of a paroxysm he went away. But with the calmness of infinitude, the repose of eternity, the majesty of godhead, *He went up!* Set it amongst the little sentences which stand at the top of all the great movements of God. Let there be light! He ascended! These are the compressions of God's power. Yet there was preparation made for this method of revealing his purpose and destiny to the disciples. This was not the first time in which he displayed his perfect mastery over things material and bodily. There are many secret trainings we undergo without knowing that we undergo them, until the final act comes,—then we see the meaning of the whole. There is a great broad pathway of training; every man is familiar with it. But there are secret trainings, hidden disciplines, remote influences. There is a great deal of God's schoolmastering done in the dark distance, and done unconsciously towards us. Yet at last there comes up an act which sums the whole discipline and mystery of our life, and gives us to see what God intended,—when we little know that He was standing beside us, revealing Himself to our innermost soul!

Jesus Christ walked upon the sea. In that there is a training towards the final conquest. Jesus walked through the midst of his enemies on the hill edge,—shot through them like light that could not be imprisoned. The disciples would remember that some day, and see the intended influence. Jesus Christ multiplied a few crumbs into a great feast. It is a hint of what he will one day do on a larger and more impressive scale. So now that the disciples are gathered around him, whilst he is yet speaking to them, there is a strange motion in that body which they once saw transfigured, which transfiguration now comes in with another meaning and a higher application. Whilst he was yet speaking to them there was a motion in the man's frame, a quivering, a trembling; it would almost seem as if the last tone of his benediction fell out of the golden cloud—a voice from heaven—a benediction from the skies!

An incident like this ought to be full of instruction to us. Amongst its many points of interest let us try to find a few. First of all, *the long-lingering influence of early notions, theories, suppositions, and fancies.* Jesus Christ is speaking his last words to the disciples. Even then, at the very time of separation, they say, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" One of their old hopes; one of the most deep-rooted feelings, assurances, and convictions of their ill-

disciplined minds. Can a man ever get away from his infancy? What a great and terrible responsibility, then, is yours that have to deal with the mind in its first openings, that have the very earliest interviews with human life, that meet souls just as they come from God and set a seal upon them! Let us teach as little as possible that children will have to unlearn; as far as it is practicable, their first notions, right notions. Herein we require the very highest teaching, the very highest genius and power of the church, to teach a *child*. You pronounce a word—a harsh, profane word—and that one word will leave a black spot on your child's soul for ever. You do some worldly, selfish, naughty deed, and that one deed sends a chill through the child's soul that it never quite recovers. It may be overcome for years; the memory may lie still through half a lifetime; yet, oh, it comes up when you don't want it to come! It blasts many a fair hope, and turns many a holy dream into a tormenting nightmare!

Jesus Christ did not treat this enquiry of the disciples in a spirit of rebuke. If they had laid hold only of a little part of the truth, he did not strike their knuckles as if they were to blame for not having grasped the great all-truth. We shall miss the spirit and genius of our Lord's reply if we suppose that he rebuked the disciples,—that he treated the disciples as though they had put an irrelevant or impertinent question to him. He does nothing of the kind. He was more interested in the kingdom of Israel than ever they could be. He had a higher and better purpose about Jew and Gentile than ever could enter into their little hearts. But he addresses them from the greater truth, and covers their small notion and little paltry conception with the infinite light of his own love and truth and purpose. Hear his correcting yet comfortfng words: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Where our human knowledge ends, God's "own power" is to be felt round about us. The "I know" is quite a little circle. God's "own power" is an immeasurable infinitude in which that little circle is set. "It is not for you to know,"—that seems final, reproachful, almost contemptuous. "Which the Father hath put in his own power,"—that is elevating, stimulating, calling to trust, dependence, devoutness, and rest of soul in God. God has put *all* the future in his own power; not only the future of the kingdom of Israel, but every man's future; your to-morrow and mine he has put in his own power. Yet how much time we spend in teasing his hand, as if we could open that great fist of his and take the treasure out of it! He says, "To-morrow is mine, the future of Israel is mine, the development of the world is mine, the difficulty of getting out of difficulties is mine. You have your limitations: within those you may be wise and strong; overleaping them you shall have the fate of wicked trespassers." Observe, then, how gentleness immediately succeeds the communication of strict law.

We come in the eighth verse upon a different tone. So many of us have been afraid of that word "*But*." This is a word which opens a door in heaven, and through the opening space there streams an intolerable radiance. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." His last word did not shut them up within

a limit that was unworthy of their greatness, unworthy of their training, unworthy of their destiny. In his very last word there is a tone of law,—Thou shalt, thou shalt not. In that last interview there was also—shall we call it a sub-tone? it was more than that—there was another tone, which promised complete, unexpected, illimitable, beneficent "power." A most gentle word! The few men around him just about to be left in the world, as it were, by themselves,—with traditions which were painful mysteries, with relationships into which they had been brought by his own teaching and which would impose upon them almost incessant suffering. Now he is about to leave them. What do they want? Jesus always says the right word at the right time. "You want *power*, and power you shall have." A most beautiful and instructive promise! The disciples were, in themselves, earthen vessels, in whom was no treasure; bruised reeds, having no strengths; poor, little, empty creatures, without power of originality, without mastery, without social influence. To them Jesus addresses this promise, "You shall have *power*." All blessings are included in one. When Jesus rose from the dead and came to his disciples, he said, "All power is given to me." Whatever a man has must be turned into *power*, or it will baffle him, it will enfeeble him; he will be the victim of his own possessions if they get the upper hand of him; he must turn them into *power*. This power was associated with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It was spiritual power. Not only the power of thinking, the power of recollecting; but a holy power, a sanctifying power, the power that tranfigured the corrupt into the pure, the low into the great and noble,—the power that turned all life into a sacrament, into solemn worship. Nor did the promise end there. So far it was but personal. It might have rested upon the men themselves; it might have been communicated to them as an individual blessing, to be nourished in their own hearts, to be kept within the secrecy of their own bosoms. So Jesus Christ having spoken the word of promise and consolation, puts the trumpet to his lips and sounds a call to service, to war, to suffering. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." *When* were they to be such witnesses? *After they had received the power*. When are *we* to be witnesses for Christ? When the Holy Ghost has come upon us. Observe how much larger was the idea of Christ than the speculation of his disciples. The mind of the disciples was occupied with an enquiry about a particular kingdom; the mind of Christ was occupied with the wants of the whole world. The disciples thought about *Israel;* Jesus thought about *man*. The disciples were busying themselves about *restoration;* Jesus was thinking about *Redemption*. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The largest man is the man who knows most about Christ and does his will most perfectly. The christian ought to be the largest-minded man in the world. Jesus never shuts a man up within a little space and says, "That will do for you." Jesus never contracts a man's intellect; Jesus never looks with contempt upon a man's service. He calls men from the little to the great,

from the local to the universal, from the kingdom of Israel to the whole globe!

Should not this have an effect upon you young men, who are touched with great ambitions and feel noble aspirations? The testimony of the church to you is this:—*That nothing so enlarges the mind, so liberates the power, so stimulates the energy, as an acceptance of Christ's word.* It never lets a man be-little and fetter himself. Christ's call is a call to light and liberty, to spacious position, and to lofty and world-embracing service. Look at the sphere—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts of the earth. What a method of putting the case that was! He accustoms the disciples to the line of advance. He does not come down upon them at once with "the great globe itself." He uses familiar words; refers to well-accustomed places—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria; still they were in their own country, still they were hearing familiar terms. "And unto the uttermost part of the earth." Even this is in harmony with his method of revelation. Little by little, from the known to the unknown, from the plain to the mysterious,—from the little child, toddling and tumbling on its first journey, to the stalwart, hardy soldier, on the far-away hill, away from home, a stranger to comfort and rest.

Look at the method of *service* as well as the method of *revelation*. "Beginning at Jerusalem." Begin on known ground. There is a wonderful secret of power in this. Some of us know it almost too well. We must have certain conditions around us or we cannot work. Some men cannot preach out of their own pulpits. Some men can preach but to their own congregations. They have confidence there; they are surrounded by loving sympathy, and they trust it, and they can work best there; it is only little by little they get away to mastery over the thinking and feeling of strangers. But this is a philosophical, statesman-like method:—Begin at Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. What would be the effect of this? Aggression! And by and by the men would come upon their own footprints. They start from Jerusalem; away they go from country to country, from sea to sea, until they come upon the ground that they seem to know,—and Peter puts his feet in his own footprints, and the disciples are once more at the city, at the metropolis, from whence they started. And so, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the name of their Lord has been testified on every tongue, declared before all mankind! Look at the heroic boldness, the divine egotism, the imperial self-assertion. "Witnesses unto *me*." Where? In Nazareth, in the little village, in the contemptible place? "To the uttermost parts of the earth." Oh, Galilean, child of Mary, son of the carpenter, Thou hast in Thee surely the fulness of the godhead! The disciples were to be *witnesses*, not original thinkers, not starters and projectors—*witnesses*. A beautiful word and full of instruction. "What do you know about the case?" the examiner says to the witness. The witness testifies to facts. The witness does not begin to say, "I think," and "I believe," and "My impression is." We can't have that. That is where the church ruins itself,—in thinking about things, and speculating about things, and suggesting things which lie far beyond the line of

fact. Have your foundation of facts right, and then build. Be right in your facts, and you need not starve your fancy; be right in your fundamental positions, in your historical bases; then I for one shall give you the largest liberty of architecture,—only we must be right about the rock which underlies the whole!

The church is to be a *witness*. A man cannot be a witness upon mere hearsay; if he testify upon mere hearsay, his testimony is of very little value. The man in the gospel sets us the right example. The Pharisees tried to confuse him, to catch him off his guard, to tempt him and lure him,—but he held to this one testimony, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know"—quite enough for any man to know. What was it? Was the one thing that he healed that man's father? No. This: "*Once I was blind and now I see.* You cannot shake that out of me. Why should you be wrinkling your foreheads, and cudgelling your brains, and provoking me with little baffling questions? I *myself* am a fact." It will be a poor ministry if the minister can only talk about facts,—if the minister be not himself the explanatory fact of his own doctrine. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" How are we to know that we have received the Holy Ghost? By the presence of *power*. That is the short, direct answer. Have we power, or are we apologising for existence, and daily excusing ourselves for being here at all? Have we to edge ourselves in, as it were; "by your leave, gentlemen," to stand to see what is being done in the world? Have we a right answer to man's deepest difficulties? When a man comes into this house and listens to the minister, is he given to feel that he hears the echo of a voice that can tell him what he wants to know? Is the minister a revealer to him? Does the minister speak light to him? Does every word of the man's lips open a door, break down a difficulty, bridge a gulf, and send the pilgrim rejoicing on his way? That is how we know we have the Holy Ghost, because we have *power*.

The church ought to be the most powerful institution in the world,—to have the one answer of the soul's most vexing problems,—the one cure of the soul's sorest disease. Men must be given to feel that they have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns; that when other people spoke peace, peace to them was no peace. And not until they came to hear of the living God did they hear a word that went through them, arrested them, compelled their attention, and put them on one of two courses,—either developing their lives into an incessant blasphemy, or developing them into a continuity of holy, restful worship. God of the light, of the great heaven and the little earth, baptize us as with fire! Amen, amen.

The Prayer.

Almighty God, we draw near to Thy Throne without fear or trembling, because Thou hast exhorted us to come boldly unto the throne of grace. We come that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need. Our life is one crying want. We have nothing that we have not received; Thou art the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift. We humbly desire, therefore, to thank Thee for all the mercies we enjoy, and all the grace which has strengthened and soothed our life; for all the hope which has inspired us in the dark and cloudy day; and for the manifold comforts which hath healed our diseases and consoled us when the help of man was vain. We have come up from our households that we may bless God in his own house. We have come to speak the praises of the Most High God, for Thy mercy, O King of saints, endureth for ever! We have not forsaken the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but with one accord are found in one place, and we lift up our hearts with one consent. Each worshipper brings his own tribute, each heart has its own song, each hand its own gift. Yet have we common mercies, for which we can find common praises. We can all unite in praising Thee for the light of the heavens, the air on which we live. Thou hast spread our table in the wilderness; when we had no bread Thou didst multiply the crumbs that were left; when the cruise of oil did fail, Thou didst cause it to flow on; when the staff broke in our hands, Thou didst give unto us Thy rod and Thy staff, and they comforted us; when the road was hilly and stony and difficult, Thou didst uphold us with strength unfailing, Thou didst bring us to the mountain top; when the wind was cold, Thou didst shield us from its blast; when the dark night came suddenly down upon us, Thou didst set Thine eye in the darkness, and behold, it was bright as day beneath our feet! What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? Some have come from the toils of business, the anxieties of earthly life, and are hardly able to emancipate themselves from recollections and apprehensions, from fears and suggestions, which are unfavourable to worship, and which mar the continuity of their contemplation and interfere with the stream of their devotional love. Do Thou grant them release from all worldly torments, from all earthly cares, and give Thy people to feel the liberty of heaven, the joy of the presence of God! Some have returned to Thy house after long absence; Thou hast seen fit to lay them aside from the busy crowd, to give them hours of pain, days of restlessness, and nights of weariness. Now that they have returned to public worship, they desire to speak of the goodness of God, His peace, His healing power, and to be thankful for his sustaining grace. Lord hear the grateful psalm of such, and abundantly sustain and comfort them, now that they have formed resolutions of intenser devotion and more constant love. Most of us have brought sorrow with us; some little shadow or dark cloud, some wearing grief, some tormenting, oppressive burden,—

sorrows we cannot tell, we dare not sigh, lest listeners should suspect the hidden grief. We can only bow down ourselves before God, praying that the sorrows of our life may be sources of joy; that out of our very grief we may be able to extract honey which shall refresh the strength of our souls. Do Thou sanctify the discipline of life to us; give us control over events and circumstances, so far as to enable us to feel that Thy shaping hand is moving amid all the chaos of life and that Thou art working out Thine own wondrous order and beauty. It will be enough for us if we know Thou art near, and that Thy throne absorbs all other powers. The stranger is here, far away from home; the young man is here, far from early association and restraint of home love; the wanderer is here, not knowing why he was born, surrounded by difficulties, depressed, almost despairing; the unsuccessful man, who has knocked at a thousand doors, and no kindly hand has opened one to him that he might have hospitality; the hypocrite, with well-set visor, with double-painted mask, well fitted to his face, the man who can say words with his lips which were never dictated by his heart; the enquirer is here, tossed about by doubt and difficulty and perplexity, sincere in his heart, yet there is a heavy mist upon all his thinking, and he is groping his way towards God, towards life; the little child is here—the summer bud, the June flower—and even the parent's eye cannot foresee altogether the development and destiny. Look upon us as we are before Thee! Lift up those that be bowed down. Strike the visor from the false face. Soothe the sorrowing; dry the tears of grief. Give stimulus and strength to every man in whom there is high aspiration, to every heart in which there is a noble purpose. Enable us all, whether tottering on the brink of the grave, or looking out from earliest life upon all the wonders of existence, to know that Thou art our Father, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, and in God may we have our being! Have mercy upon us, Thou loving one! Thou delightest to forgive: we all need Thy forgiveness. Help us from our heart of hearts to confess our sins. May we show how truly we confess it by the intensity of our hatred of it. When we own our guilt, may we tremble and be in despair, until we see the Cross, the light of the advancing Saviour, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Wash us, and we shall be clean. Let Thy blessing now go from congregation to congregation, from minister to minister, until all who are engaged in worship feel the fire of devotion glowing in their hearts. May souls to-day be reclaimed, be re-established, be edified, be comforted. Thus at eventide we shall be a Sabbath Day's journey nearer home! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on Sunday Morning, June 18, 1871.

Expository Readings in the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER I.

10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.

11. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and snpplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

THERE are four points in this text. First,—Men overpowered and dispossessed of self-control in the presence of a wondrous revelation. The disciples were evidently overcome; they were in a state of inexpressible surprise; the surprise was, perhaps, in some degree extatic; they had never seen this sight before.

A thousand memories crowded upon them; strange anticipations of the future agitated them. The men were simply overwhelmed, confounded by the wondrousness of the spectacle on which they gazed. You know what this is in common life. There are moments in which men are not themselves. Great events suddenly happen, and all presence of mind is taken away from the individuals to whom they occur or before whom they transpire. Men that in ordinary circumstances are sagacious, that know what to do and how to do it, are suddenly thrown oft their balance and altogether incapacitated for service in the presence of some stupendous act or under the influence of some most unexpected and overpowering event. Joy has that effect upon men. Sometimes they cannot speak for joy. Sometimes children have seen sights which have taken away their power of speech; the thing was so unexpected, was under some circumstances perhaps so joyful or so full of promise, that all their little powers have been taken at a disadvantage, and they have not been able to tell in anything like straightforward sentences what their joy is. It is the same with men. Men open letters conveying unexpected intelligence,—it may be painful, it may be pleasing; no matter, the effect is the same. All power of regulation, control, counsel, movement in relation to the affair, seem to be taken away from them. In the case before us, you have a number of men transfixed, gazing upon the heavens. A cloud has received their Lord out of their sight; they would see him no more. Yet they look up as if they might see him again: one moment, one sunny moment, would be to them an eternal pleasure!

The thing to be observed in connection with this exposition is, that this is the *natural effect* of all christian revelation. The natural and proper effect of God's communications to the heart of man, of God's presentations of himself to the human eye or the human understanding, is surprise, elevation, bewilderment, or ecstacy. Perhaps this sounds to you like a novel statement. It is only novel because we have worn off the finest edge of our christian sensibility. When the angels came down and visited the shepherds in the plain, the shepherds were *afraid;* when the angels spake to the women who came to the Lord's sepulchre, the women were *afraid.* This is the natural effect of all divine revelation. A man ought not to allow himself to get into that state in which he can receive divine communications, or see divine effects, without sensibility. I question whether a man ought to allow himself to grow downwards so completely as to be able to look upon a great mountain and think nothing of it. This is one of the penalties of familiarity. A man comes from what you who are born in London call the country; and he looks at St. Paul's, and is dumb, is overpowered. "Why," he says, "I can't see anything more than this to-day, this week: this is enough. This is a prayer in stone; this is a poem caught on its way to heaven." And there is hardly a shopboy in London who does not feel it incumbent upon him to sneer at the man from "the country," standing and looking in that way at St. Paul's. We ought not to allow ourselves to get so familiar with great revelations of human genius, and especially the grandest declarations of divine power, as to look upon them as if they were nothing. It is not a sign of independence or

greatness on our part; it is a sign of insensibility and incapacity to understand the sublime or to sympathise with the beautiful. If this be true in common things, it is specially true with the revelations of God. To some men the testaments, old and new, are as fresh as if God had just published them, as if the ink were hardly dry, as if the sheet had been let down from heaven, and for the first time they saw God's word, written in God's own handwriting. Better to live in that state, better to see new phases in the most familiar scenes, better to live in a state of ecstacy, wonder, and bewilderment concerning things glorious and sublime, than to have no eye for things shaped into infiniteness of beauty, and for revelations which ought to sound as heavenly songs in the depths of our human life.

The next point is this,—Men recalled from *enfeebling reverie.* It was a beautiful thing for the men to be looking up into heaven after their Lord, as if they could see something in the air almost like a pathway,—as if they could see somewhat of the outline of that cloudy staircase up which He ascended to the higher scenes of God's creation. But they were not to stand there always. It was good for them to look upward, but there was something more to be done. The two men in white apparel said, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" There is a possibility of wasting our time in the sublimest contemplation. There is a danger of some of us working exclusively in the line of our ideality. When a man is naturally inclined towards ecstacy, reverie, unearthliness, speculation, and wonderment, he ought to fight against his inclination, so as to bring it into harmony with other powers. There are persons who miss the whole genius and meaning of christianity because they profess to be overwhelmed by its mysteries. Christianity is so sublime a thing to them that they fail to see it in practical life; they see only the sublimity,—not the practical, philanthropic aspect of it. Their life is one long ejaculation, or one useless, unprofitable sighing after the impossible. Have we felt anything of that kind in our own experience? We have been happy in proportion as we have been contemplative. We have been full of joy and full of hope in proportion as we have betaken ourselves away from vulgar scenes, from fields of practical service, and have sat far away from the cry and roar of the world, and looked upon things that were ideal and sublime, supersensuous and altogether transcendental. That is not a healthy state of life. It is right to be contemplative. Contemplation may, however, be pushed too far. It is right to have hours of rapture and ecstacy; but a man cannot live so always. Hence there comes, with immense force and wonderful practical meaning, to our hearts this enquiry, "Why stand ye gazing into heaven?" Who asked the question? Two men in white apparel. Who were they? I am inclined to conjecture that they were Moses and Elias. I think I know their voices again, having become familiar with their unprecedented tone through the Old Testament. Is it not the ring of *their* clear voices, "Why stand ye gazing?" There is something Mosaic in that enquiry,—there is something of the power and passion of Elias there. We, too, my brethren, are watched by the old master-workers of the world! "Seeing, then, that we are encompassed by so

great a cloud of witnesses," why should our life be a life of mere gazing and contemplation when there is work to do and we are called to do it? When the women went to our Lord's sepulchre, they looked down into the tomb, and the angel said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" So we are not always to be *looking down* into the death-pit. When the disciples were looking up, rapt and entranced, a strange light radiating from their rugged faces, two men clothed in white apparel, like the robe of the angels, said, "Why stand ye gazing up?" So we are not always to be *looking up* into heaven. Here is a lesson upon attitudes, upon christian postures. Looking down,—not always; looking up,—not for ever. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" may be said to every mother who goes to look at the few inches of daisy-covered sod under which her little child lies. "Why stand ye gazing up?" may be said to all the mystics, idealists, and transcendentalists who spend their life in pursuing airy dreams, airy nothings. What, then, is to be our attitude? *Look about you!* Look at the things that make up your day, that constitute your field of sympathy and service and kind concern. Whensoever you look up, know that there is meaning in upward looks, power comes from heaven-directed glances. But we are only to look up that we may be inspired to do the work that lies nearest to our hands.

The third point is,—Men instructed and comforted by a *promise*. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The same Jesus! Who wants an amended Christ? Who would care to have another version, phase, aspect of His name and person and ministry? "This same Jesus," who knows you, who taught you, who died for you, who saved you, who has in him all the old dear memories,—"this same Jesus shall come again." One would like to see Jesus of Nazareth and Capernaum, one would like to see the carpenter's son; one would not like him to be so changed that those who knew him first know him no longer. We want such elements of identity, at least, as shall enable those who knew him first to say with glad recognition, "This is the *same* Christ." He is promised to come again,—come in like manner, with the same voluntary motion, in the same sublime fashion, with all the grandeur of the old masterliness, sovereign in will, imperial in command, gentle in spirit, pure as God, tenderer than woman! The world cannot live without promise. We cannot be strong without poetry. We must have dream and fancy and singing words; musical rhythmic sentences that shall sing to us when other voices are silent, that ever sing of the one thing—an unclouded perfect future.

The fourth point is,—Men betaking themselves to the right *preparation* for the future. The men are bewildered, lonely, more or less sad. Conflicting emotions heave their hearts. Sometimes they don't know whether they will break out into the laughter and triumph of ecstacy and joy, or they will break down into such tears as strong disappointed natures only can shed. To what do they betake themselves under such circumstances? They go back to Jerusalem, the city that

had killed their Lord; they go back fearless, courageous, simple-minded, delivered from all fear of men. There are some visions that make new creatures of us; some sights that give us new power; some events that lift us out of our slavery and make us more than conquerors. Here you have a few men going back into Jerusalem stronger than ever they were in their lives, though their visible Lord is no longer by their side. What do they pursue as their first exercise? This: "All continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." He prepares best for the future who puts his future into the keeping of God! He is most master of to-morrow who has no to-morrow but God's will! There are times, O sceptical hearer, when we *must* pray! Your theories break down at certain points. When we are well and strong and happy and prosperous, your theories look like very beautiful web-work, wonderfully executed and very exquisite in earthly beauty. But when heart and flesh do fail, when there is a great collapse in all that made our world, when circumstances darken and nature gathers round us like a frown which means ruin, when joy has been taken out of the heart and our treasures have been smitten,—we *must* pray! We must pray, if it is only to a *pillar;* the heart must cry out, if only to the distant clouds or the cold stars, shining away without knowing human sorrow or human madness. We *must* pray! Those say so who know it best. "They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." See the prayer meeting there was! Yonder is Peter. You never expected to see him again after he cursed and swore and denied his Lord,—but there he is. There is no occasion for you who may have committed some terrible crime no longer to be found in prayer meetings and in church engagements. There is a way *in* as there was a way *out*. The way out was *discipline*, the way in is *penitence*. "These all?" But there is one wanting,—Judas. These all? Thomas, the doubting man, the man that would see before he would believe, and who would touch before he would say he had seen his Lord. Here he is. Peter, a reclaimed apostate; Thomas, a consolidated power: names that stand at the top of human nomenclature, and names that are obscure and difficult to remember,—they are all here. The women were there. Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus Christ's brethren. Mary the mother of Jesus! Her position that day was more than official; she held no office; she did not take the presidential chair; she did not dictate the course of the proceedings; she did not call upon the disciples in the order in which they were to pray. We have no reason to believe that she did any of these things. But there is something better than office. There are times when a little child becomes a history to us; when the little child that can hardly reach up to your table seems to centralise all your life. Sometimes we meet persons in whose presence we feel a kind of intellectual elevation and sanctification, because they have spoken to some great man. You know what this is. Persons who have seen a great genius like to get together and talk the case over, and the very sight of that one dominating personage has constituted those who saw him into a kind of intellectual church.

Mary the mother of Jesus! She had touched him before any of them had touched him; she had seen him grow up day by day; her heart had been pierced through and through on his account. Altogether there was something about her that made the place feel very sacred. So it must be in our life, or it will be a poor, poor life, if now and again we do not come upon a child, a man, a friend, in whose presence we feel all the sanctity of the past and the inspiration of the future. Brethren, I call you to-day, not to Mary the mother, but to Jesus the Son. We have not seen Him yet. He will come again!

The Prayer.

Almighty God, Thou hast opened a door out of the darkness into the infinite light; Thou hast called us out of the low valley, where we found only a grave; Thou hast set our feet upon the mountain top, and caused us to see the kingdoms of Thy boundless creation. We rejoice in these things, for the intellectual enjoyment which they bring, for the mental and moral robustness which are identified with faith in Christ; for all the noble manliness, the tender charity, and all the beautiful service with which we have become familiar since we knew Jesus Christ. We come to worship Him to-day. He is our only Saviour, our infinite Redeemer; we find our all in Him; He has within Him the fulness of the godhead; He hath received gifts for men,—all that we want is in His hand. Lord, open Thine hand, and satisfy our souls with food! We thank Thee for a disposition to worship God. We bless Thee for this call from all that is material and visible, all that is transient and deceptive. We rejoice in being called away from a world so small and cold and disappointing, where the hills are so steep, where the roads are so thorny, where the events are so numerous, where every staff breaks in the pilgrim's hand, and where all that is round about is beautiful on the outside but full of deception, into the light, into heavenly places, into imperial, everlasting kingdoms. Thou hast summoned us into these enjoyments. We bless Thee for Thy goodness. We take courage, and become strong. Help us in our

daily life to show the purity of our faith and love towards Jesus Christ. May we not be carried about with every wind of doctrine. When things material and perishable are shaken, may we look up as men whose treasures are in heaven. When commerce is trembling, failing, disappointing its devotees,—when the world brings forth nought but thorns and weeds and thistles,—when it is dark and cold round about us,—may we then show how deep is our faith in the invisible, how constant is our love in Christ. When health fails, when we are afraid of things that are high, when friends fall away from our side, when we find hypocrisy where we expected sincerity, and lies where we had expected truth, even then may our heart be confident in God. When the servant fails may we cling with more tenacity to the Lord. We pray Thee now for the forgiveness of our sins. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done. We know this right well; we are witnesses against ourselves. We do not lift up ourselves before God as though we were not chargeable with manifold crimes, errors, trespasses, and sins. We rather put our hand upon our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and say, Unclean, unclean! Measuring ourselves by ourselves, we are honourable, upright, true, and socially irreproachable, it may be; but setting ourselves beside Thy holiness, looking up to the standard of Thy righteousness, and viewing our life from the life of Thy dear Son, we know that we are wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores. There is none righteous, no not one. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; we have become sinful before God, and now our hearts' cry is, God be merciful unto us sinners! Bring us one and all to the great Cross. Help us through sin to see the meaning of the mystery of sacrifice. Bring us through our weakness to see the fulness of Jesus Christ's strength, that we may sin no more against Thee, that our life henceforward may be pure and true and beautiful, with all moral qualities, and helpful and redeeming to other men by reason of its purity and gentleness and sympathy. Do Thou put within us Thy Holy Spirit, that He may reign in us, the light of our understanding, the conductor of our will, the sanctifier of our affections, the interpreter of Christ, the seal of our redemption! Lift up those that be bowed down. Nourish the crushed heart. Take out of the hands that are trembling the cup that is too heavy for them just now, and give them one moment's release, that they may come to it again with higher courage and deeper trust. Where there is stubbornness of will, do Thou use Thy hammer, Thou breaker of hearts, that there may be penitence, submission, lowly homage to the one true God. Help all perplexed men, all oppressed hearts, all persons who are in difficult circumstances, who are baffled, tried, confused, enfeebled, whose very strength has been squeezed out of them by an unsympathetic world, who have laboured for naught, who have spent their strength in vain. Thou knowest how to comfort such, and how to restore those who have given way under the pressure which they could not resist. Be very near all tempted souls; when Satan is laying his gunpowder round about them, and is about to apply the spark, do Thou then suddenly come down, that Thy saints, having felt how near they were to perdi-

tion, may now feel how mighty is the deliverance of God, how sure is the succour of heaven! Thou knowest our peculiar temptations; how one man cannot understand the temptations of another; how into each heart the devil finds one secret road. Our hope is in Thee, our confidence is in Christ, our safety is in the Cross! Hold Thou us up, oh Father of our spirits, and we shall be safe. Help us to be diligent readers of Thy book. Give us eyes that see deeply into all its wondrous meaning. Give us hearts that feel every appeal of its doctrine and its sentiment. May ours be a life which shall incarnate the holy truths, the stimulating promises, and all the glories of Thy holy book. Now be with us; be with us again as Thou usest to be in days which are dear to memory. Revive our hearts. Give confidence to our souls in Thy house, that we may honour it and love it with all our affections. Bless the stranger within our gates; the busy man whose memory becomes a temptation to him; the young man who is full of hope; the little child who is the joy of the household. Do Thou come near unto them. May we know of a surety that Thou art within reach of the whisper of our love; then shall we be set in Thy house, and we shall have joy unspeakable! Amen.

The City Temple.

REPORT OF DISCOURSES DELIVERED BY

JOSEPH PARKER,

In Poultry Chapel, on June 25th and July 2nd, 1871.

Expository Readings in the Acts of the Apostles.

CHAPTER I.

15. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of his ministry.

18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

N this paragraph there are at least three points of perpetual interest.

I. Peter's position indicates the working of *the law of leadership in Christian communities.* Society without leadership sinks into confusion. In the long run leadership resolves itself into a question of personal qualification. For a time men may arise who claim commanding positions who are unable to discharge the duties which their ambition has coveted. In such instances there would seem to be a miscarriage of the natural law and order of things; yet it is only temporary; sooner or later unqualified men have to resign positions which they ought never to have assumed. In a great leader many elements of qualification are combined. Other men may excel him in detached points, but taken as a whole, he rules not perhaps by one dominant faculty, but by a noble proportion of natural and acquired gifts. The position of a leader is not so easy as it may appear to be to unreflecting observers. Men see the elevation, not the strain and responsibility which that elevation involves. The only sound rule for promotion to influential positions in the church is, that *wisdom*, wheresoever found, in the rich or the poor, the old or the young, should be recognised and honoured. "Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand wisdom." The true leader of public sentiment and action is born, not made. These reflections upon leadership are the more needful and pertinent to the occasion, because some have sought to wrest the action of Peter into a justification of an unauthorised primacy. Peter's action is itself the best answer to such interpretation. Peter did not take the case into his own hands; nor did he claim superiority of judgment, much less infallibility; there is nothing to show that he exalted himself at the expense of the assembled church. In a simple business-like manner he stated the case which the church had to consider, and then called upon the whole assembly to come to a conclusion. The case in hand was settled not by one or two, but by the whole company of christians. It was not even determined by the apostolate, the eleven did not undertake to complete the original number of twelve. This incident throws an immense responsibility upon all who are associated in church fellowship. This responsibility, if not most jealously guarded and fulfilled, is fraught with the most serious danger. Where spiritual character falls below official position, men are sure to become the victims of their own conceit, and to set up masteries and lordships which know nothing of the spirit of Christ. This is the great drawback of ecclesiastical democracies. Men who are immature in judgment, and but partially instructed in christian doctrine, are called upon to discharge official obligations. It can hardly be wondered at that such persons should be carried away by the rivalry of debate and the love of personal supremacy. Where is there a crowd that can seriously deliberate? As numbers increase it would seem that power of reflection diminishes. The sense of responsibility which ought to govern individual action becomes so divided in a miscellaneous assembly as to leave the personal conscience unexercised. In such instances

the probability is that merely carnal leaderships will be established in the church, and that combatants will care more for victory than for righteousness. He leads best who knows the art of wise following. The leader is often, indeed, but the mouthpiece of the whole community. He is to put into speech the thought and feeling which his followers are unable to express for themselves; and having done full justice to their convictions and aspirations, he is by a skilful hand to turn the whole force of the church into the wisest and most useful direction. The leadership of which we are now speaking does not imply absolute supremacy in the church. All human leadership is to be subordinate to the Headship of the Divine Redeemer. The mightiest men in the church are continually to say from the heart, "One is our Master, and all we are brethren."

II. The course described in the text throws considerable light upon *the construction of the christian ministry.* It was required that the successor to the vacant bishopric be a man who had known Christ from the beginning and had been a witness with the other apostles of the Resurrection of the Saviour. Inasmuch as the personal witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus would die out, we must find in this method of choosing a man to take the place of Judas, a law which will apply to all times and occasions. That law evidently is that those who sustain the office of witnesses of Jesus Christ are to be men whose spiritual intimacy with Him is intense and fully tested. Every minister must have seen Christ, not indeed with the eyes of the flesh, but with the vision of the soul. Every minister must also have known the power of the Resurrection of Christ so that he can testify to all the highest meanings of its spiritual purpose. He only knows how to expound Resurrection who has himself risen again. The Resurrection of Christ is a fact which must be repeated in the history of every man who has entered into sympathy with him. It is undoubtedly clear, from the election of Matthias, that there is in the scriptures a distinct claim to apostolical succession. That this doctrine has been abused is no reason why its scriptural authority should be impaired or denied. For my own part I believe profoundly and sincerely in apostolical succession. It is right, however, that the sense in which this belief is entertained should be frankly avowed. We are to try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Many are able to say, Lord, Lord, whom Jesus Christ never knew. Who then is infallibly in the apostolical succession? My answer is, He is in the apostolical *succession* who is animated by the apostolical *spirit.* The office is not a question of mere ecclesiastical descent, it is from beginning to end a question of spiritual illumination and sympathy. To recur to a point already touched upon, it is evident that the twelfth minister was chosen by *the whole Church.* It must be remarked, however, that he was only chosen subject to a distinct expression of the Divine will. The election was not determined by personal taste, much less by the industrious canvassing of ambitious candidates. The church had no will but the will of God. The minister was sought by prayer, and as a consequence was received with submission and thankfulness. True ministers are never forced upon churches. The

prepared man goes to a prepared people, and by so much as he works along the line of their consent and sympathy he works with the advantage which comes of mutual confidence and love.

III. The method of testing the Divine will brings up the difficult question *of the interposition of God's hand in human affairs.* We are unanimously agreed that God does interpose in the out-working of of Christian designs, but how far we can with positive certainty ascertain where his work begins in contradistinction to the work of man it is almost impossible to determine. There have been times when we have wished for a simple method of knowing what God would have us do. Gladly would many earnest men avail themselves of the use of the lot but for a hesitation as to the validity of that method of discovering God's will. Yet why should there be any doubt as to its validity? Unquestionably the first consideration relates to the spirit of the enquirer rather than to the forms of which he may avail himself. Where two courses are open to a man, and he is in doubt as to the election of either of them, why should he not, after due religious preparation, involving as this must do the entire subordination of his personal will to the will of God, risk the decision of the case upon the casting of lots? Is there anything in such a course that is inconsistent with the *simplicity* of the christian religion? The man, it is presumed, is most deeply anxious to know what God would have him do; his anxiety amounts at times to a keen distress; he is willing to make any personal sacrifice which the divine will may impose upon him, and how far soever the decision by lot may oppose even the remotest and subtilest inclination of his own choice (admitting that he may have a choice even where there is an apparent equality of inducements) he is prepared to accept it. Under such circumstances the lot may be surely used with advantage. So important is the case, that we must again insist that more depends upon the spirit of the enquirer than upon the method of determination. An enquirer may almost unconsciously manipulate the lots so as to gratify a wish which he would hardly confess even to himself. In almost all cases of doubt the perplexed man has more or less of a choice. At that point the silent and often severe battle has to be fought. The man has a leaning towards a certain course, yet he would not pursue it if he knew it to be opposed to the Divine will; at the same time he would be most thankful were the lot to confirm his secret bias. That man is not prepared to go to the lot until he has divested himself of every suggestion of his own will. We are speaking now of very special cases of difficulty. We are not prepared to teach that upon every occasion we should turn the decisions of our life upon the casting of lots; on the other hand, we are not prepared to condemn them who are fully persuaded in their own minds that the casting of lots should precede the settlement of every doubtful case. As a general rule, three things will be found to concur in making the path of Providence clear to a devout enquirer: (1) A firm conviction on the part of the man himself; (2) Substantial unanimity on the part of impartial and experienced counsellors; (3) A combination of favourable circumstances. These three conditions may meet, and yet the will of God may not be discovered.

A man may have a firm conviction in his own mind in the pursuit of a most selfish course; impartial and experienced advisers may be influenced by merely worldly considerations; and circumstances may be interpreted through the medium of strong inclinations towards a special view. So we are again thrown upon the fundamental principle that everything depends upon the *intense religiousness* of the spirit of the enquirer. That will control his convictions, dictate the qualifications of his advisers, and give him a sound opinion as to the import and quality of circumstances.

CHAPTER II.

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting.
3. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance
5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven.
6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
7. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?
8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born.
9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

WHEN we come to the word *suddenly* in the second verse, we are somewhat startled. We do not know what terrible or sublime event may be about to transpire. Who can be prepared for the sudden disclosures of divine power? If, however, we read the first and second verses together, we shall find that the word "suddenly" occurs in a connection which explains its meaning and modifies its effect. In the first verse we have composure, dignity. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." The great annual feast, one of three, called Pentecost, had fully come,—the fiftieth day from the time of the feast of the Passover. The disciples were all with one accord, without tumult, without commotion, steadfast in heart, unanimous, convergent in mind, affection, purpose; they were all in one place,—sign of unity, of fellowship, of security. Such is the account given in the first verse. We come into the second, and we find the word "suddenly." Putting the two verses together, we see how order and eccentricity, calmness

and commotion, law and miracle, are united and harmonised in the divine government of the world. We speak of suddenness. If we suppose that the word suddenness describes aught of mere haste on the part of God, anything of mere extemporaneousness in divine thought and action, or regard it as confining the deed to the instant, we shall altogether mistake the genius and method of the divine rule. The *revelation* was sudden. What of the *preparation?* Christianity in all its phases must be a continual excitement, wonder, surprise. Even summer is a continual surprise to men who have seen it seventy times, and who yet have an eye for the beautiful and an ear that can hear the going of God on the living winds. Yet summer comes with regular return from climes of eternal loveliness. Summer is an old friend, yet every June is a stranger.

We speak of the suddenness of God's movement. Why every movement of his has *eternity* for a background; he does nothing in the moment *for* the moment. Every moment in which he works comes up sobered with the wisdom, bright with the lustre, of eternity. We know somewhat of suddenness in our own way of life. We know, also, how suddenness can be associated with permanence. Here for example is a volcano,—looking at it, you say, "It burst out so suddenly! we had no idea whatever of the discharge of fire,—in a moment the great torrent, blazing and devouring, streamed from the mountain!" So it did. But can you tell how long the fire had been preparing for that climacteric point? The effect to you was sudden; the process was long-continued. So with revivals of religion. We sometimes hear that a revival has broken out "quite suddenly." There is a sense in which that description of a revival may be perfectly true,—but what of the antecedent processes? what of family religion, what of secret prayer, what of long-continued, private mediation upon the holy word? These things were not known publicly; but they have been proceeding a long time, and the result is that suddenly a whole congregation is melted, and there rises from a thousand hearts a cry for the living God. These are the revivals that are to be depended upon; revivals that have a history, silent, secret, unknown. Given such a revival; and though there may be a good deal about it that is offensive to taste, and that is unduly exciting, a good deal that is intemperate, and that one would rather not see,—yet there shall come of it fruit rich and abiding.

So also with individual *conversion*. It is sometimes asked, "Is conversion a sudden act or is it a process?" It is both. Severe critics say, "We have no faith in these sudden conversions." We must ask such critics to name the particular meaning they associate with the expression *sudden conversions?* A man is suddenly turned to God. Who can tell how long that man's mind has been undergoing a secret preparation. His mother taught him God's word when he was a little child,—the Sunday school teacher stored his memory with sacred passages when he was an immature youth. He has had personal and relative affliction; he has been disappointed in business; he has been undergoing manifold discipline. What if in one moment all this should come to a point, and that point should be called conversion? An action is not necessarily extemporaneous because it is sudden. A speaker may not know the

next sentence he is going to utter, and yet he may not be speaking extemporaneously in any shallow sense of that word. His *whole life* may be a preparation ; every day may be one continual prayer for more light and more power, and when the time comes on which he has to open his lips, he is not speaking something which he wrought in one moment,—he is speaking the experience of a life-time ; he is bringing out of the fountain of his experience a stream for the refreshing of those who wait upon him. There are some moments in which is gathered up the force of a life-time.

The gift which was imparted with this suddenness, yet with this composure, was the Holy Ghost. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Now, there is much that is purely miraculous in this paragraph. We must not modify the speciality or force of the purely miraculous element. We cannot explain it. We say all we can say when we declare, It is a miracle. Well, as the record was given for our instruction and edification, we ask a great question in enquiring, "What are the signs, what is the proof, and what the confirmation, that we ourselves have received the fulness of the Holy Spirit?" The question which earnest men will put to themselves will not relate to cloven tongues, rushing mighty winds, and merely external phenomena ; it will relate exclusively to the inward divine gift,—the gift of the Spirit of God. Mark, a man cannot be the *same* after he has received the Holy Ghost as he was before. Can God enter into a man's life, rule his thinking, control his will, elevate his affection, and that man be just the same as he was in his pagan or natural state? It becomes us, therefore, to ask with simplicity and reverence, What are the signs which infallibly declare that a man has within him, as lord and king and sanctifier, God the Holy Ghost?

"There appeared unto the disciples cloven tongues like as a fire, and sat upon each of them." May we not look for fire on the part of those who have received the Holy Ghost? Is religion to be measured by its coldness, or by its fervour? Is there a single passage in scripture which justifies frigidity, indifference, on matters belonging to our highest life? Are we not, on the contrary, exhorted to be "fervent in spirit"? Is it not to be with the Holy Ghost, as it was with Jesus Christ himself? Did not our hearts *burn* within us whilst he opened unto us the scriptures? Do we not read of the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of *burning*? Was not John, the forerunner of Christ, a *burning* light? Will those who come after the Saviour be less fervid than those who merely announced his coming? We cannot explain what fervour is. It is one of the subtle characteristics of life which never can be put into language. We can tell where knowledge begins and where knowledge ends. Knowledge is a measurable quantity ; but fervour, no man can fully explain. It asserts itself in the whole life, in sympathy, in judgment, in method of service, in constancy of love, in determination of will, in the grip of the hand, in the tone of the voice, in the glance of the eye. It is everywhere ; yet no man can explain it fully. The Holy Ghost was given unto the people of the ancient church as fire! Why, fire is terrible! Is the church to be marked by terribleness? Even so. The most terrible element in society ought to be the christian church. Bad men

ought to quake when they see a good man coming to them. "What have we to do with thee, thou Holy One?" The honour of christian men; the promise of christian men ought to be more sacred than the life-long oaths of other men! Fire is *purifying*. Is the church to be a sanctifying force in the world? Verily so. Fire is cheering, comforting. The fire of the sun blesses the earth, and all the worlds that wait upon his glowing ministry. Is the church to cheer and comfort, to enliven and animate mankind? Undoubtedly so. Christianity without glowing love is christianity minus Christ.

"And they began to speak with other tongues." And the people coming together were amazed, saying, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born." This is the second sign. Have we this sign that we have received the Holy Ghost, namely, the power of speaking with other tongues? What is the great underlying truth of this particular incident? It is, that he who speaks in the power of the Holy Ghost speaks the universal language. The christian speaks to every man in his own tongue, in a far higher sense than can ever be known by the use of grammars and dictionaries and forms of speech. Let us understand that the men in question in the text did actually speak to all those who came together from the different regions specified in their own tongues. Still it remains a great and solemn truth that he who speaks after the manner of the Holy Ghost speaks all languages. The time will come when men will not have to learn languages as they learn them now; when the mere gift of uttering vocables will be enlarged, and the church shall have full empire over all methods of communication. But in the meantime christianity is the universal tongue. The christian man speaks to every other man in his own tongue. To the refined, he speaks with a refinement never taught in the schools; to the vulgar and the low he speaks with a homeliness, condescension, and point which go right to the lowest, vulgarest man's heart. In this way christianity asserts its divinity. There are some subjects upon which you can talk satisfactorily only to given audiences, elect companies, persons admitted into the place of assembly by ticket. You can on such subjects speak only to a chosen few. But when you speak Christ's gospel you speak to *man*. Not only to men, but to human nature,—not to the solitary individual or the special class. Knowledge of human nature is the universal language. He who knows humanity knows all languages; and he only knows human nature who has studied in the school of Christ. Understand that the men who spoke thus miraculously with tongues did not speak incoherently, confusedly, uttering sounds which they themselves did not know. We read that they spoke "the wonderful works of God." The prophet is not to lose self-control. We are not to have a babbling and jabbering church; we are not to encourage men to express themselves insanely, without coherence or meaning. There is one theme, often begun, never ended, "The wonderful works of God!"

(To be continued.)

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